

Letters and Lunches

Scott Turnbull

Summary – Part 1

After the events of the MOM, Harry is emotionally shattered. Unable to leave Privet Drive for the summer, he turns to his friend Hermione for help. She receives a letter from Harry 2 days after returning home. She fears for her friend's mental health and gets her mother involved. Through a series of letters and lunches Hermione and her parents attempt to piece together Harry's broken life.

Timeframe

The story takes place during July of 1996, the summer between 5th and 6th year

Harry Potter and associated milieu, characters, and situations are owned by J.K. Rowling and her licensees. This is a work of fan fiction, produced solely for enjoyment. No infringement of rights is intended
Story Friday - 5 July, 1996

Emma Ganger was enjoying the morning sitting in her back garden reading a professional journal. Their house in Crawley was a very comfortable place to live. She and her husband, Dan were justifiably proud of their home. They lived a good life, as co-owners of the Granger and Granger dental practice. Emma was working about half time and Dan three quarter time, leaving time for each other. They had a good marriage and were very proud of their daughter who had returned home on holiday from boarding school two days earlier.

The wizarding war heating up in Britain had not yet reached Dan or Emma. They had not read anything in the newspapers that that they could link to wizarding trouble although there had been a number of unexplained deaths reported in the newspapers. None of the cases had eyewitnesses, shots were never fired, there were no calls for help, and no footage on the evening news.

Somewhat harder to pass over was her daughter's injury the last week of school. The school physician and one of the teachers had stopped by their practice a little more than a week ago, initially

explaining that her daughter had suffered an injury from a mis-directed spell and would be as good as new in a few days. Emma and Dan had assumed that it was the result of an accident at school and the school officials had said nothing to give the Grangers a different idea.

When Hermione had come home, and Emma had seen the injury, she was quite shocked at the size of it. Starting at Hermione's left shoulder running diagonally to her right hip, the injury looked like a purple surgical scar measuring nearly two feet. Two days later it was barely noticeable. Hermione had been taking the medications that the school physician had prescribed, and was to take them for another four days. It had never occurred to Emma that her daughter's wound was the result of an attempted murder, and had been life threatening.

While Emma was enjoying her garden, Hermione was working on her homework, finishing an essay due at the start of term in seven weeks, The use of Dragon Blood in Invisibility Potions. Hermione was a nearly seventeen year old witch, home from her 5th year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry located in north central Scotland, about 550 miles northwest of London.

Hermione's studies were interrupted from a tap on her window.

"Hedwig!" she beamed. She was anxious to see what Harry, her good friend from school had to say. She'd been with him through a very traumatic adventure at the end of the summer term and was worried for him.

Her school friend Lavender insisted that Harry and Hermione fancied one another, and were destined to become a famous couple. A more objective viewpoint would put them as constant companions, right on the edge of something more. She opened her window to let the beautiful snowy owl into her room, and stroked the owl for a minute as she untied the letter from Hedwig's leg.

Dear Hermione,

Hermione, what have I done? Sirius is dead because of me, and you were so badly injured. I am so sorry. I accept all of the blame. I have

no business being a wizard. I can't even save a shaggy black dog, let alone the entire wizarding world.

You told me it was a trap. Why didn't I listen? That witch laughed when Sirius died. It's my fault that he was there. I really tried to curse her in the lobby, and I couldn't even hurt her. I am such a failure. Dumbledore should have killed us both when he had the chance. I deserved it. I understand why you hate me.

I don't expect to hear from you again. Again I am so sorry.

Harry

An earsplitting cry disturbed the peace of Emma's garden. "MUM!!! What should I do?" Mrs. Granger took the parchment from her hysterical daughter and read it. "Let's go see him Hermione. That boy needs help; and from what you've told me over the years, he'll never get it at home." The two women got into the car. Hermione gave her mum Harry's address in Little Winging.

Hermione's relationship with her mum had changed quite a bit in the last few years. Until her third year at Hogwarts, she had been amazingly open with her parents, at least Emma. She told and wrote home about her feelings and day-to-day happenings at school. Part of the closeness was due to being an only child, part was due to the lack of close friends that Hermione had made as a child.

Their relationship seemed to grow distant at the end of the third year. Perhaps the year of keeping the secret of the time turner secret from everyone including her best friends started it, but Hermione shared less and less with her parents as the years went on. She had chosen not to mention the darker aspects of her world – Death Eaters, open prejudice, the politics, and the rebirth of Voldemort.

Emma knew that Hermione was holding in more than she should. The hour-long ride to Surrey County seemed like a good opportunity to reconnect with her daughter.

Emma envisioned starting slowly, but the questions seemed to all roll out at once. "Hermione, tell me what really happened that last week

of school? What were you and your friends doing in London? How did you get there from northern Scotland? Hermione, why didn't you tell us the whole story? How did you get hurt? A man was killed. Why didn't you tell us?"

Hermione realized that she needed to tell her Mum the whole story. She opened up like a floodgate. "Mum, I barely know where to start. There was this evil Defense teacher who tortured some of the students in detentions, and Harry was always getting hurt. Then she got Professor Dumbledore and some of the other professors got sacked. Professor Umbridge was totally out of control. Then Harry dreamed that his Godfather was being tortured. Mum, I tried to stop him, but he went anyway. We couldn't find a teacher to notify. I had to help him. Oh Mum, I could have stopped him." Tears were streaming down the young woman's face.

"Let's start over. Please tell me one thing at a time. Why were you in London?"

"Harry dreamed that Sirius was being held in the Ministry of Magic. We flew there to help Sirius, but it was a trap. Voldemort's Death Eaters were waiting for Harry, and we tried to run away. They started attacking us, and we couldn't defend ourselves very well. Then Sirius and the some people that Professor Dumbledore knew came to save us. Sirius was killed, and Voldemort tried to get Harry."

"I don't understand. Who is Voldemort and why are they after Harry?"

"I don't really know why. Voldemort is a really evil wizard who has been after Harry since he was a baby. They were after this magical prophecy, and I think it had something to do with Harry. Oh Mum, why does everything have to happen to Harry? His life has been one tragedy after another. His parents were murdered when he was a baby. He lives with evil people. Voldemort won't leave him alone, and I don't know how to help him."

Emma had listened to her daughter carefully. "What did you mean about the people that Harry lives with? They are his aunt and uncle, aren't they? Are they bad people, or do you mean that Harry is somehow being mistreated?"

"I think they treat Harry horribly. His clothes never fit, and he's always so skinny when he starts school. He told me a story about a cupboard, but I really didn't understand. They never let Harry talk on the phone." I think he is really scared of his uncle.

"Have they ever hurt him?"

"Oh Mum, I don't know. They never get him anything for Christmas, but I don't know if they yell at him or..."

"Dear?"

"What if they beat him?"

"Hermione, we don't know that. Let's wait until we see him. Would you like to have him stay with us for a few days? We could have lunch with him and ask."

"Thanks Mum. You and Dad are wonderful." She breathed easier.

Mrs. Granger parked the car at number 4 Privet Drive. They both got out and went to the door. Petunia opened the door. She looked at the two well-dressed women standing at the door and smiled. "Can I help you?"

"Hello Mrs. Dursley. I am Emma Granger. This is my daughter Hermione. Hermione and Harry go to school together. We are here to take Harry out for lunch."

The smile vanished from Petunia's boney face. Her worried eyes scanned the neighborhood for observers. Wringing her hands on her apron, she asked, "School? St. Brutus?"

"May we come in? Thank you" said Emma firmly, and she walked in, not waiting for an answer.

She briefly surveyed the house. There was no sign that Harry lived there. None of the family pictures included Harry. There was nothing from his school out in the living room. "Harry please."

“Upstairs.” Snapped Petunia as she turned on her heel and stalked out of the room.

“I’ll get him.” Hermione climbed up the steep stairway that Petunia had pointed to. The room at the end of the hallway had several latches on the door, and a cat-flap at the bottom. The door was closed. She softly knocked on the door. “Harry?” There was no answer. Hermione opened the door. The room was dark except for the light filtering through the pulled down shade. “Harry?” There was no answer. Hermione flipped on the light and looked around. Curled up into a ball on the little bed was Harry. He looked terrible. Wearing only a dirty sweatshirt, and graying underpants, Harry was sobbing into a pillow. Hermione knelt down and pulled him into her arms. She had never seen him in this much anguish. “It’s alright Harry. I’m here. I’ll take care of you.” She smoothed his unruly hair. Her heart ached seeing her normally strong, confident friend so completely in anguish.

Harry half opened his eyes and saw his friend. “Mione?”

“Hi Harry. She looked at his eyes. They were as bloodshot as she had ever seen. Harry’s face looked pale and gray. He was shaking. She gave him a soft kiss on his forehead. “It’s alright. My Mum brought me. We are going to take you back for a while.” Harry mumbled something into her shoulder as he clung to her. She caught the words ‘Dumbledore’ and ‘protection.’ Let’s get you cleaned up. You’ll feel better.”

Downstairs the conversation had gotten interesting. Emma had followed Petunia into the kitchen. “What do you mean St. Brutus? Hermione and Harry go to Hogwarts.”

Petunia didn’t answer.

“You are Harry’s aunt Petunia Dursley, aren’t you?”

Petunia nodded nervously. “Are you a...?”

“Pediatric Dentist? Yes. My husband Dan and I have a practice in Crawley.”

Some of the fear lifted from Petunia's face. "I see. I live here with my husband Vernon, and our son Dudley. We are..."

"What about Harry?" Emma cut in.

Meanwhile, upstairs Hermione had gently but firmly gotten Harry into the bathroom to get cleaned up. She opened the little closet in Harry's room and was appalled at what she found. "Oh Harry," she said. There was one other sweatshirt, a few t-shirts that looked like they would fit Umbridge, and two pair of impossibly large jeans. On the floor was a pair of trainers that had been duct taped to hold the top and bottom together. Hermione thought of her own closet, and felt so bad for her friend. Finding the least awful set, she laid them outside the bathroom door, and softly knocked. Harry took the clothes, and dressed in the bathroom. While waiting, Hermione peeked in Harry's school trunk, and noticed the now half empty bottle of Ogden's old Firewhiskey that George had given Harry among Harry's school robes. She also noticed several pieces of what looked like a small mirror at the bottom of the trunk. Hearing the bathroom door unlock, she quickly closed the trunk and sat on the small bed.

A few minutes later the three of them left the house. Emma was furious with Petunia's attitude towards Harry. Once in the car, Emma asked Harry if he minded having lunch at a local pub. He didn't. In fact he had never been there. They stopped outside of a local pub, the Cork and Cleaver. Their table was quiet. Harry was obviously glad to be out of the house, and had lost his dazed look, but did not have a lot to say. They sat eating their lunch in comfortable silence. Hermione kept a hold on Harry's arm. After they had gotten half way through their lunch, Harry excused himself to use the restroom. Hermione looked at her mother, and asked, "How can we help him? Mum you should have seen his room. There was nothing in it. He doesn't have any clothes. It was awful."

"Will he let us take him shopping? We could have him stay with us this weekend."

"I don't know. Maybe we could ask him."

“Ask me what?” Harry had returned to their table.

The young woman looked embarrassed for her friend. She knew how much he was hurting, and didn't want to say anything that would make him feel worse. “Harry, we were wondering if you might like to stay with us for a few days? Maybe this weekend?”

Harry's face lit up for a split second, then he lowered his eyes. Headmaster Dumbledore had told him that he had to stay at Privet drive for most of the summer to renew the “blood ties” that offered him some protection against Voldemort. It had only been a week. “Can't. I can't leave Privet Drive for more than four hours a day for most of the summer.”

Emma felt the pain flowing from her daughter's friend. She was certain that he had an unstated reason for his refusal. Obviously the thought of leaving his relatives was a dream for him. She would ask her daughter about it later. She tried a different approach. “Harry, what happened the last week of school?”

Harry looked at his friend. Hermione picked up Harry's hand again and held it tightly. The pain was evident on his young face. “I made a horrible mistake. I got my friends hurt and my godfather killed.” It was obvious that his self-confidence was shattered.

The silence that followed was deafening. Harry was certain that Mrs. Granger was going to yell at him, take Hermione and leave. Hermione was certain that Harry was going to walk out on them, she could feel him tensing. Emma couldn't believe the volume of pain that her daughter's friend was holding in.

Finally Emma said, “Please tell me about your dream.”

Harry found that he needed to tell his story. “It wasn't a regular dream, someone, ... someone put it there.” Harry was not sure how much Hermione had confided in her parents, or if they had even been notified by McGonagall the previous week.

Emma sat there quietly waiting for Harry to continue. Harry started again, “There is this evil wizard...”

“Voldemort?”

Harry nodded, “Yes. He was putting these dreams, visions really, in my head for the last month at school, and I...”

“Acted on one of them?”

“Yes. I believed it was real, and I almost got my best friend killed. My Godfather tried to rescue us...”

“And someone killed him.” She leaned over and hugged the boy. “Harry, I am so sorry that you had to go through this.” She looked him in the eye and clearly stated, “This isn’t your fault. Hermione doesn’t blame you. Dan and I don’t either. We do not hate you. Please don’t blame yourself.”

“Tears streaked Harry’s face. He looked down and wiped his face. After a minute, he said “Thank you for lunch Mrs. Granger. Would it be OK if you took me home now?”

Emma smiled at the boy and hugged him again. “Of course Harry. She paid the bill, and they drove back to Privet Drive.

Hermione and Harry sat in the back seat. She held Harry’s hand on the way, keeping him focused on her rather than his pain. She thought about his letter. He obviously felt dangerously guilty about leading them into a trap. She wondered what he had meant by “saving the wizarding world.” What had transpired between Dumbledore, Harry and Voldemort? Who else had been in the lobby? Hermione had been in the Hospital wing for a few days, and had never really heard the details. She wanted to know the answers to help her friend, but realized that this wasn’t the time to press him further.

Emma watched her daughter kiss Harry on the step outside at the Dursley house. Hermione obviously cared a lot about her friend. On the way back they both were lost in their thoughts. Finally Emma asked her daughter, “You really flew to London?” Hermione nodded, and they were back in silence. After a few minutes, she asked, “You

really would do anything to help him?" Hermione nodded. "Then let's figure out what we can do to help."

On Saturday morning Hermione sat at her writing desk and started a letter to her best friend.

Dear Harry,

I am so happy that we were able to have lunch yesterday. I read your letter over and over. Mum and I are so worried about you. Thank you for talking with my Mum. I know that you don't know her very well, and have no reason to trust her, but she really cares about you. I really care about you too. You are my best friend, and I wouldn't even want to think about being without you.

Harry, I need to ask you for your help. I need to know what happened that night. After Dolohov hit me with that flame curse, what happened? Please believe me when I tell you that I'm not trying to place blame on anyone, I just need to know. I was so drugged up with all of Madam Pomfrey's potions that I don't remember many of the details of that night. Who came to help us? Which Death Eaters were captured or got away? What happened to the prophecy? Why did Malfoy think that you knew about it? Please tell me Harry.

Please understand. My injury was not your fault. I was careless and let an evil man get to me after I had beaten him. You showed us how to approach a downed opponent in the DA meetings. I allowed myself to get careless, and fortunately have been given a second chance. Ginny, Neville, and Luna are fine. Ginny wrote me and said that Ron is finishing his treatments this week. Professor Lupin told me that Tonks is doing fine too. She left St. Mungos, and is on a three week paid leave. Harry, we have been given a second chance!

I can only imagine how much you miss Sirius. Please listen to me. I had the opportunity to get to know him a little bit last summer when you were with your aunt and uncle. He absolutely hated being stuck at Grimmauld Place. A little piece of him wore away every day that he was there. Every time one of the Order members would leave for a

mission and Sirius had to stay, another piece wore away. I know you don't want to hear this, but I don't think he had much left last month. I think that given the choice of any of a hundred final outcomes, Sirius would have selected to die helping to protect you. Like myself, know that Sirius loved you.

Harry, you mentioned being responsible for saving the wizarding world. How did that burden get placed on your (cute) shoulders? If it really is there, how can I help you?

Please help me help you.

Love,

Hermione

PS We are taking you out for lunch on Monday. Same time.

PPS Sorry for keeping Hedwig overnight. She must have been waiting for me to reply.

Harry put down the letter. How could she forgive him so easily? He read her letter again. Clearly she didn't blame him for almost leading her to her death. Did she really think he was cute? Harry smiled, if only for a moment. It was his first smile in a week. He opened the window shade and felt the warm sunlight.

Meanwhile Emma had dialed her oldest friend Diane Turnbull. Diane was a practicing Psychologist at the Crawley Connections Organisation – a mental health clinic. Emma had never told Diane that Hermione was a witch, but Emma trusted Diane completely.

They arranged to have lunch that day, with the understanding that there was some "business" to discuss. They met at the Rat and Parrott pub on High Street midway between their respective practices. Diane handed Emma the clinic brochure describing their services. Providing confidential counseling for children, young people and young adults on any issue including family and relationship problems, child abuse, depression, eating disorders, and more. 'Spot on.' thought Emma.

After some chitchat, Diane asked her long time friend, "What's up, Em?"

"One of Hermione's school friends is in a bad way right now. Hermione received a letter from him yesterday, and he sounded really depressed. We drove to his aunt's house where he lives, and took him for lunch. Diane, he is a special kid, and has a lot of problems."

"Em, what do you mean?"

"Problems?"

"Special."

"Diane, do you believe in the supernatural?"

"I have no reason not to. Do you?"

"Kind of. Just keep an open mind. OK?"

"Sure, Em. You mentioned a letter. Not many kids write letters these days. Can I see it?"

Emma took a deep breath. She thought about all of the directions that this conversation could go. She handed the parchment to her friend.

"Interesting paper," Diane mumbled as she felt the parchment.

Diane read through the note, and looked at it again. Several words and phrases stood out. Sirius certainly wasn't a common name. The only other time she remembered hearing it was in connection with Sirius Black, the escaped mass murderer from a few years ago. Dumbledore was another uncommon name. She couldn't remember hearing that name in years. Diane reread the line, I don't expect to hear from you again. The boy's letter had all of the makings of a suicide note.

“Em. He clearly has some issues. You said you saw him yesterday. What was he doing when you found him?”

“Hermione went up to his room to get him. I did not see him there or get a look at his room. She told me later that he was on his bed half dressed crying.”

“What does his personal support group consist of? Does he have any sort of relationship with his parents?”

“I would say that there’s no love coming from his aunt and uncle. His parents were killed when he was a baby. I saw no obvious signs of physical abuse on him, but he was pretty covered up for a warm day. I don’t think they talk with each other in any meaningful way. I’ve met his aunt once. She acted as if Harry wasn’t even a member of her family. He does have a good group of school friends.”

“And Hermione?”

“She cares a lot about Harry. They have been friends since they were eleven.”

“And now?”

“I think they are on the threshold of beginning to date. I’m certain that Hermione wants to. He may be a step behind, catching up.”

Diane looked at the parchment again, and thought for a half minute. “Who was Sirius, and what was he to Harry?”

“Sirius Black. Yes that one. I believe that he was Harry’s Godfather.”

“Is he a...?”

“Yes.”

The two women looked at each other for a few seconds, each wondering what the other had really meant, and how it would affect their friendship if the words were actually spoken.

“Em, what do you think Harry meant when he wrote I don’t expect to hear from you again? What was he planning on ending?”

“My first reaction was a fear for the worst, but after seeing him, I’m not so sure. I think he believed that Hermione would not want him to be her friend any longer.”

“Believed. Did they get along at lunch?”

Balancing Harry’s request to leave early and their departing kiss, Emma nodded an affirmation. “OK.”

“How would you like me to help?”

“Diane, I know he’s depressed to at least a moderate degree. He was recently a victim in a very violent attack, and he certainly feels that he needs to accept a large degree of the responsibility for them being in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Who was there? I don’t remember reading about it. Where was it?”

“He was out of school with Hermione and four other friends. They were in a government building after hours.”

“The Ministry?”

The two women looked carefully at each other and nodded.

“And Hermione?”

Emma nodded again in relief. “You know?”

“My grandfather was something of a squib. He told me the strangest stories when I was a little girl. I always wanted to believe them. What about Hermione?”

“The girl can do amazing things, and I don’t think I seen a tenth of it. I’ve never seen Harry do magic. Hermione tells me that he is a very powerful wizard.”

“Again, how would you like me to help?”

"I'd like you to talk with him. Given the very unique circumstances, an out of the office conversation might be best. Maybe for lunch in a few days?"

"That sounds good. Don't wait too long. Monday would work fine. Let me know. Thanks for lunch, Em."

"Thank you, Diane."

"Doctor."

"Doctor."

The previous evening, Emma relayed the events of the last two days to her husband Dan. He had never had an exceptionally close relationship with his daughter, but realized that he currently had an opportunity to get much closer.

Dan and Hermione had made plans to go shopping for Harry Sunday morning. As with most parents, Dan had his stated reasons (helping Hermione pick out some decent clothes that might cheer her daughter's "friend" up a bit) as well as the unstated reasons. (learning more about his daughter) for spending the morning shopping for a boy that he had never even met. Hermione liked Harrods and Dan didn't mind the drive or the higher prices. On the drive north into London, Dan silently went through the list of questions that he wanted to ask her daughter. He knew of magic, and certainly believed that it had existed. The few tricks that Professor McGonagall had demonstrated six years ago at their house were inconsistent with the violence that he imagined taking place that night. Emma had told him that the purple streak that sliced diagonally across their daughter's chest had nearly disappeared in the time that Hermione had been home.

Dan reflected on visit that they had received from Dr. Pomfrey and Professor McGonagall that morning a week ago. It had been brief, and in hindsight had not really answered their questions. They had

been told that Hermione and her friends were at a government building on some errand and had been assaulted by a group of thugs. There had been a fight and a number of the assailants had been taken into custody. Their daughter had been injured, but was expected to recover fully in a few days. He had inquired and been told that the other students' injuries were minor, a broken nose, sprained ankle, those sort of things, with no need to worry about it. After talking with Emma yesterday, Dan wondered what percentage of the truth that they had been told. Had the two women appeared to meet them at their dental practice out of convenience for them, or with the intent of keeping the meeting short?

They got in the car to go, and eventually got to the M4 motorway heading to London. Dan didn't know how his daughter would react to the questions, so he had decided to prioritize his questions and see how many he would get through. He was reminded of something that one of his solicitor friends had told him, "Never ask a question, if hearing the answer will make things worse."

He wanted to understand her relationship with Harry, get some more insight about what happened that night, and perhaps understand how his daughter got hurt. Screwing up his courage, Dan proceeded. "Hermione, tell me about Harry." He started off with what he felt was as open-ended a question as he could get.

"He's in my year at school. We are in a lot of the same classes together. He gets good grades. He plays sports at school, Quidditch. It is a bit like football, except played up in the air. His parents were killed when he was one. They were a witch and wizard. He has been living with his aunt, uncle, and cousin in Surrey since. They don't treat him like a member of their family." Dan nodded, hoping that she would continue. "Dad, he's really kind and very brave. He's had such a crappy life."

"Who was Sirius?"

"Sirius Black was Harry's godfather."

Dan thought of Hermione's godparents, the Turnbolls. They would be Hermione's guardians if something had ever happened to Emma and himself. "Why didn't Harry live with Sirius?"

"He wasn't in a position to take care of Harry."

"Couldn't he afford it?"

"No, that's not it. In fact, I think he might have been pretty wealthy. He'd been unjustly imprisoned for twelve years and escaped just before our third year."

"What happened?"

"It's kind of a long story."

Dan thought back, remembering the news from three years ago, about an escaped mass murderer. He looked at his daughter with concern.

"Dad, he didn't kill those people. He was set up by a wizard named Peter Pettigrew. Sirius was sent to prison without a trial."

"OK." The conversation, while enlightening, was getting way off track. He was certain that everything his daughter had told him was the truth, but she hadn't really answered his question. He tried again. "Harry is your...?"

"Friend, Dad. He is my good friend." She blushed and turned her face to the window.

Hermione had comparatively few friends in grade school. Dan wasn't certain if that was a result of her profound intelligence, her emerging powers as a witch, or her drive to do well in her studies. She had mentioned several of her students at Hogwarts over the years - a roommate Lavender, a girl named Ginny, her brother Ron, his brothers, and Harry. Emma thought that they might be dating. Like most fathers, Dan wasn't sure if he wanted to know. He knew that Hermione like every little girl eventually had grown up, but no father was happy at the thought. She had never referred to a young man as

being a “good friend” before. He vowed to have another look at the school pictures that Hermione had on the wall in her room.

They arrived at the car park, and got a ticket from the attendant. “Lead the way, my dear. What are we getting?”

“A few shirts.”

A few blue oxford dress shirts also led to two pair of jeans, trousers, a pair of Doc Martins, trainers, sox, a sweatshirt, and a dozen pair of boxers. “Please don’t ask Dad,” as he inquired if Harry would rather have briefs. She’d hated the sight of those graying briefs. Carrying their packages back to the car, he saw the smile on his little girl’s face. If she was happy, he was happy.

With twenty minutes left in their ride, Dan resumed his questions. “Hon, what really happened that night?”

“Voldemort, he’s the bad...”

“Your mother told me. Go on.”

“He tricked Harry into thinking that his godfather was being tortured at the Ministry of Magic in London. Harry went to help him.”

“And you and the other students...”

“Went with so Harry wouldn’t be alone. We’d been practicing defensive spells all year, so we thought we could be of some help.” Hermione paused. Dan watched her pull nervously at the hem of her skirt.

“How did you get there?”

“We flew.”

“Your mother mentioned that. What happened there?”

“Voldemort’s men had planted a trap for Harry. They tried to get him to steal a magical prophecy. When Harry realized that Sirius wasn’t there, they attacked us, and we tried to get away.”

How could you steal a prophecy? Why would they need to trick Harry into helping?”

“It was a magical sphere, and it had Harry’s name on it. Only certain people could touch it. I really don’t know what it contained. It was smashed that night, and I don’t think that anyone saw or heard it.”

“How did Harry’s Godfather get killed? Was he shot or stabbed?”

“By that time I was injured and unconscious, so I’m not sure. Harry said that Sirius was dueling with his cousin, and she somehow killed him.”

“Swords?”

“Wands, Dad. She must have cursed him and ...”

“It’s OK honey.” He could see the tears streaming down his daughters cheeks and didn’t want to press. He reached over and took his daughters hand. “Let’s go get some lunch. You must be starved by now.”

“Thanks Dad. I love knowing I can count on you.”

“I love you too, Hermione.”

At the same time Hermione and her father were having lunch, Harry was at Privet Drive reading a message that had arrived late last night.

Harry James Potter

Number 4 Privet Drive

Little Winging, Surrey

Dear Mr. Potter,

Please be advised that your presence is required on Monday 15 July for a follow-up interview regarding the felony offenses committed at the Department of Mysteries on the evening of 28 June.

At this time, no charges have been made against either you or your classmates. Official legal representation is not needed at this time. However if you wish, your solicitor or another adult may be present.

While this is an official criminal investigation, it is not being held in any of the courtrooms that you might be familiar with. Please report to my office on level one at 9:00 AM. Please plan on two to three hours. Also, please plan on lunch with myself and several of the investigative Aurors following the interview.

Amelia Bones

Director of Magical Law Enforcement
Ministry of Magic

Harry reread the document. Criminal investigation, no charges (yet), legal representation. Another anxiety attack set in. His heart raced, cold beads of sweat formed on his upper lip and forehead. His lungs felt like they'd stopped working. Harry's legs started shaking and he staggered across the room to his trunk. He flung himself down next to the trunk, opened it, and poured himself half of a juice glass of the fire whiskey. In one grimacing gulp he finished it, and returned to his bed, tears rolling down his cheeks. 'My life is one gigantic nightmare. What else can go wrong?' he thought as he lay shaking with cold chills.

After a sleepless hour or so, he got up looked out his window at the darkness, and started on the letters that he had been putting off.

Dear Order

I am OK.

Harry

The first lie was easy enough. He started on another note.

Dear Neville

I'm sorry that I got you hurt that night. I apologize for getting your Dad's wand smashed. I guess leaving school and going to the MOM wasn't such a brilliant idea after all. Thanks for helping me though. You're a great friend.

Harry

He thought how much he would have treasured having his father's wand, and how guilty Neville must feel having it lost. "The hits just keep on coming," he muttered to no one.

Two letters down, and a very painful one left to write.

Dear Hermione,

Thanks for your letter yesterday, and thanks again to both you and your mum for checking up on me. I can't believe you've forgiven my decisions and actions leading up to getting our group injured, a handful of Order members injured, and Sirius murdered. My brilliant behavior has led to my being called in by the department of magical law enforcement for an investigation on Monday

You asked me to write down my memories of the events of that night. Here is what I remember.

During our History of Magic OWL I saw the vision of Sirius being tortured in the Ministry. It seemed so real. You were spot on when you tried to warn me about my tendency toward saving people. I wish I had listened. I wish Dumbledore had told me he thought Voldemort would try something like that. You know all the events leading up to our finding the prophecy and exploding the shelves that night in the ministry.

At that point we ran in several directions. The Death Eaters split up. Dolohov and Rabastan went after you. After you cast Silencio on Dolohov, he hit you with that flame curse. Luckily it was a weakened version of the spell. However much you got was too much. I stunned

him, and Neville carried you with us. We met with Ginny, Luna & Ron in one of the rooms, but couldn't get the doors locked quickly enough. Ginny had a broken ankle, Luna'd been hit on the head and Ron'd been cursed with something that made him seem drunk. He was really difficult to move along with us. He got tangled up in some brain creatures (Cagnivorum Cadogans, I think). We ended up in the Death Chamber with the archway that we had seen earlier.

Neville and I kept stunning the Death Eaters but they wouldn't stay down. Neville's nose was broken and he couldn't perform spells properly. I was so angry and so scared. Then Tonks, Lupin, Shackbolt, Moody, and Sirius charged into the chamber. They began dueling with the Death Eaters. About that time, the prophecy smashed.

Bellatrix defeated Tonks and gave her a concussion with internal bleeding from her fall. Then she defeated Kingsley while he was dueling two Death Eaters I couldn't identify. As Moody dueled with Malfoy & McNair, he lost his magical eye. Neville beat McNair by poking him in the eye. Dolohov hit Neville with Tarantallegra. Then Sirius tackled Dolohov. I cast Petrificus Totalus and we were able to capture him. Like you'd heard, Sirius was dueling with Bellatrix Lestranger. She cast a spell which immobilized him and he fell through the archway. I still can't believe he didn't just get up and walk back out. How can that be death?

About that time Dumbledore arrived. He had the presence of mind to set up anti-apparition spells around the area. Within five minutes, most of the Death Eaters were down, and Dumbledore had magically tied them up. Rockwood was captured by Dumbledore while dueling with Kingsley. I captured Malfoy. Nott, Jugson, Rodolphus, Crabbe, Rabastan, McNair, and Avery were captured by the joint effort of Lupin, Kingsley, and Dumbledore

Bellatrix escaped to the lobby. I tore after her in a blind rage about Sirius. We dueled for a minute. I didn't beat her even though I wanted to so badly. Dumbledore came after us and brought her down.

Then Voldemort appeared. He knew the prophecy was destroyed and was livid. He tried to kill me, but Dumbledore animated the statues

from the fountain and they took the brunt of the curses. At one point, Voldemort possessed me and tried to get Dumbledore to kill us both. That was the most horrible feeling. Now I know how Ginny felt and I wouldn't wish it on anyone. In the end, Voldemort apparated away with Bellatrix and Dumbledore got us all back to the school. Fudge and some others saw him.

Hermione, I was horrified when you fell. I prayed you weren't dead. You cannot believe my relief when Neville found your pulse. We weren't prepared. We were unable to keep an opponent down after capture. It was completely naive on my part to assume they would stay down, once beaten. I didn't even think of collecting or snapping their wands.

Yesterday, you appeared at my bedside like an angel. Your touch was so gentle and your look so forgiving. I thought you were part of an amazing dream until you kissed me. I can't believe you came to me. I'd come to realize over the last few days just how much you mean to me, how much I don't deserve you.

I'm glad you have forgiven me. I know that I'm slow to forgive myself. Sirius was my last bit of family. If anything more had happened to you, I couldn't have stood to live.

Love,

Harry

Harry sealed the letters and asked Hedwig to deliver them. "Please deliver Hermione's last and wait for a reply. Thanks girl." The beautiful owl took to the air and flew off.

On the morning of Monday 8 July Harry's owl tapped on the window as Hermione was having breakfast.

"Thanks for coming Hedwig. I really needed your help," Hermione said stroking the snowy owl, removing Harry's letter, and attaching the note to Hedwig's leg. "Please take this to professor Dumbledore

as soon as you can.” After a few quick gulps out of the juice glass that Hermione offered, the beautiful white owl took to the air. Circling once with a soft hoot, Hedwig saw the girl wave thanks before beginning her journey north.

At 11:30 Emma Granger’s gray BMW pulled into the driveway at Privet Drive. Harry was waiting on the front step. Hermione rushed out to greet Harry. “Hi Harry,” said Hermione giving Harry a bone crushing hug worthy of their friend Hagrid.

“Good morning, Mrs. Granger,” said Harry, opening the door for her daughter. Harry walked around the car and got in the rear door next to Hermione.

Emma smiled at Harry, pleased that he looked better than the last time that she had seen him. “Good morning, Harry. I thought we’d try someplace different today. Do you have to be home at any certain time?”

“No ma’am. Just within four hours.”

“Harry, if it is OK with you, we are also having lunch with one of my old girlfriends, Diane Turnbull.”

“OK, Mrs. Granger.”

She looked in her rear view mirror and smiled at the boy. He was so polite. Hermione had shown her his letter relating to the events of the 28th. Hermione had explained in general terms about the different curses and hexes that had been fired back and forth. The idea that someone could possess the mental power to lift objects (or kill someone) just by thinking it and saying a few words both amazed (and somewhat frightened) her. Looking at the skinny teen in the backseat sitting next to her daughter, she had a hard time comprehending that he could have saved her daughter and the rest of the kids from twelve killers and that monster.

She looked at him again, and sadly realized that he was wearing his “other” sweatshirt. She couldn’t imagine a parent showing so little care and nurturing for a child. While she didn’t wish any harm to

Petunia, she certainly wished that her daughter's friend could have a better life.

Twenty minutes later, they turned onto High Street, and parked across the street from their destination, The Rat and Parrot pub. Harry got out and opened the doors for Hermione and her mother. They both thanked him. Entering the pub, Emma saw her friend Diane sitting at a table in the back, and they walked over.

"Harry this is my friend, Dr. Diane Turnbull. We went to school together, and have been friends since collage."

"Hi Dr. Turnbull."

"Hi, Harry."

The waitress took their order, and they were left alone again.

"Harry, I work with kids who carry a lot of pain around with them. In many cases, I can help them get straightened around, and sometimes put a smile back on their face." Diane was one of those rare people that caused almost everyone that she met to warm up to her.

Harry liked the woman. "My cousin had braces on his teeth. His teeth got straight. My aunt told me that I couldn't have them."

Diane understood his misinterpretation and smiled at him, meeting his emerald eyes. "No, not that kind of pain Harry. I work with teens whose heads and hearts are hurting. A lot of teens have some serious problems in their lives, and sometimes it helps to have an outside person to be able to talk things over with. Other than brushing and flossing, I don't know a thing about dentistry."

Hermione wasn't sure what her mother was up to and wanted to find out. "Mum, I left something out in the car. Can you unlock the door for me?" The two Granger women excused themselves, and stepped outside the restaurant.

“Mum, what do you think you’re doing? What’s Harry supposed to say? Hi, my name is Harry Potter. I am a famous wizard boy. My life would really be OK except that the evil Lord Voldemort is trying to kill me. He sent a team of Death Eaters to try and steal a magical prophecy that a fortune teller made about me, and in the mean time my Godfather who could turn himself into a dog got killed. In my spare time, I fly around on a broomstick. Pardon the fact that I’m wearing rags, I left my dress robes in Scotland. What were you thinking?”

Emma had expected this and calmly replied, “Hermione, Diane knows a little bit about Harry and your special circumstances. I had lunch with her Saturday, and gave her the basics on Harry’s situation. I found out that she already knew bit about the wizarding world. Sweetheart, he needs all the help that he can get. Please let her talk with him.”

“Oh.”

“Let’s just give them ten minutes, and see what happens. OK?”

“The thing is mum, Harry doesn’t trust very many people, and if someone violates his trust, he just shuts them out. I was pretty amazed that he said anything to you last week. I don’t want you to lose that.”

The two women looked back to their table. Diane and Harry were quietly talking about something. Emma asked the waitress to bring over four half-pints of Fosters. As their food was ready, they returned to the table and sat down.

A few minutes later, Diane’s pager went off. “I’m terribly sorry, I need to get back to the office. Em, Hermione, it was great to see you again. Thanks for lunch. Harry, I did enjoy meeting you. I’d like to have a proper lunch with you again soon, if you have the time. I can help.”

Harry looked her in the eye and nodded.

“Bye,” they all said.

“She seems like an interesting lady,” said Harry picking up her business card. “What kind of Doctor is she?”

Emma replied, “Diane is a psychologist, specializing in sorting out problems that teens are likely to have; depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and family relationships. Her practice is a few doors down from ours. We were roommates at collage, and have been friends since.”

Hermione knew this to be a slight stretch of the truth, but didn’t say anything. She looked over at her friend. Something had clearly happened since they last saw each other, and she didn’t think it had anything to do with her mother’s friend. “Harry, what’s wrong?”

“I got a letter yesterday from the ministry, regarding an investigation by the department of magical law enforcement. I need to go see Director Amelia Bones next Monday for an interview. She was there at my last trial. I feel like a Christmas goose, knowing that it is 17 December.”

“Harry, what did she send you? May I see it?” asked Emma.

Harry handed her the letter.

“Harry, in the non-magical world, it looks like this would be a request for a deposition. In other words, it looks like they are going to ask you some questions, and get your statement about what happened. It usually is used to prepare criminal charges against the bad guys. In this case, I expect that they are trying to sort out who threw what curses, so the Death Eaters can all be charged properly. It looks like it is intended to be a friendly meeting. What about it worries you?”

“The last time I received an invitation regarding a “friendly conversation” it turned out to be a full trial in front of all fifty judges of the Wizengamot court. That was last summer when my cousin Dudley and I were attacked, and I tried to defend us.”

“Could I get you anything else?” the waitress asked.

“Another round, please.”

Hermione looked at her mother, but didn't say anything.

Emma continued, "Harry you might be right, but it appears that in this case, the letter is clearly trying to convey a different message. Hermione didn't get a letter like this, did you dear? Why would they single you out Harry?"

Hermione shook her head in amazement. 'Things always happen to Harry.' She squeezed his hand.

"I chased after Bellatrix after she killed my Godfather. We battled in the lobby, and I cursed her illegally."

"Then what happened?"

"I didn't do it right. She got up and laughed at me. Then she tried to kill me. Voldemort came. He tried to kill me. They battled with Professor Dumbledore. Voldemort mentally possessed me, trying to get Dumbledore to kill both of us. Somehow I was able to throw Voldemort off, and they both got away."

Emma looked at her daughter's friend in amazement. How in the world could all these things happen to any one person? Who in the world could stay grounded with that hailstorm blasting down on them? Emma felt like she could use two sessions with her friend Diane, just thinking about it.

Hermione could feel Harry's leg shaking under the table. She wanted to get back into the car with Harry, so she could hug him properly. "Mum, maybe we should get going. Harry needs to get back."

"Thank you for lunch, Mrs. Granger. Everything was delicious."

"Harry, you are so welcome. Let's get going." She paid the bill and they walked across the street to the car. There was a large shopping bag in the back seat.

"I was out shopping with Dad over the weekend, and we found a few things for you. Let me show you." Hermione was obviously delighted for her friend as she showed him the clothes that she had bought.

Harry liked everything that Hermione had bought. She had great taste. Harry liked the darker colored clothes, and everything looked like it would fit great. He did not take the boxers out of the bag, but looked over at his friend. She squeezed his hand again. Hermione liked the boxers that she got him.

"Thank you. You didn't have to do this."

"Harry, I wanted to. You deserve to look great. I know your aunt doesn't take you out shopping too much."

Harry thought for a moment. "She never has."

'What a miserable excuse for a human being,' thought Emma. She wasn't sure who had caused more pain for Harry - the wizarding government, Voldemort, or Petunia Dursley.

They pulled into the driveway at Privet Drive.

"Thanks again for lunch Mrs. Granger. Hermione, thanks for the great stuff."

"Harry, you are so welcome. Here is my card if you ever need something during the day. We will see you soon."

"Bye Harry."

"Bye Hermione." She whispered in his ear, "I love you."

"Me too. Bye"

Hedwig reached the window of the circular office of Albus Dumbledore Monday evening. Recognizing the owl as Harry's, Albus said, "Excuse me Minerva. Let's see what the news is from our young

friend.” Upon opening it, they soon realized that the letter was not in Harry’s handwriting.

Dear Professor Dumbledore,

Sir, I am so worried about Harry. Last Saturday, I received a horribly frightening note from him. My mother and I drove to meet him for lunch. He looked terrible. He was shaking and in tears on his bed. It looked like he hadn’t been out of his room in days.

Professor, I’m certain that you have excellent reasons for keeping him with those awful people, but sir, living with them is breaking his spirit. Something is so very wrong. I have never seen Harry so deeply depressed. He really and truly needs help. Please reconsider.

Hermione Granger

“Well, Minerva, what is your assessment?”

“Albus, there’s not a doubt in my mind that the boy is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. How much of it has been put there by you, how much of it by others, and how much was self imposed, I suppose only Harry knows.”

“His destiny does indeed include some heavy burdens. Let’s pay Miss Granger a visit tomorrow, and see what else she can tell us.”

Miss Granger,

Thank you for your letter. Harry’s well being weighs heavily on my mind as well. Professor McGonagall and I will visit you and your parents tomorrow at noon at their practice.

Albus Dumbledore

A few hours later in the littlest bedroom at number 4 Privet Drive, Harry was concluding his business with the bottle of Ogden’s. Harry tossed the now empty bottle in the trash bin in the kitchen before grabbing a piece of leftover chicken and returning to his room.

Harry noticed an owl tapping at his window. He took the envelope and opened it.

Dear Mr. Potter,

It is our duty to inform you that the late Sirius Black named you one of the beneficiaries to his estate.

As you may know Gringotts takes no position regarding the unproven criminal activities of our customers. As such, Mr. Black's Will can be executed without restriction to follow his final documented wishes. Given the size of the estate, his wishes are remarkably concise. There are several documents that need signing.

Please arrive at the estate office at 3:00 PM on Monday 15 July for a reading of the Will, review of the estate, signing of various transfer papers, titles, licenses, etc. Please bring your vault key to the meeting.

Sincerely,

Ragnot

Head Goblin

London Office - Gringotts

Through an Ogden's induced haze Harry reread the letter muttering, "Brilliant. Now I'm going to get rewarded for allowing him to get killed. Maybe Bones will throw me in Azkaban first. Maybe I could be cellmates with Malfoy."

"Shut it Potter. We're trying to sleep."

As he drifted off to sleep, Harry thought that sharing a cell with Malfoy might be an improvement over living with the Dursleys.

SMASH. Harry awoke to the sound of the empty Ogden's bottle hitting his headboard. "What the hell do you think you are up to Potter? Bad enough that you have been a layabout over the summer without you turning yourself into a sodding drunk too. Get your lazy arse out of bed, and get the garden tidied up. Now!"

"Yes, Uncle Vernon."

Harry got out of bed, put on a shirt, his old trainers, and his old jeans. He walked out of the room, bumping into Vernon in the hallway.

"Watch where you are going," Vernon said, shoving Harry to the other side of the hall.

"Get out of my way if you want me outside," Harry shouted back, standing very close to Uncle Vernon. For a minute, the two glared at each other.

With none of the grace that Sirius had exhibited in the department of mysteries, Harry suddenly tripped as he stepped back. Vernon had accidentally stepped on Harry's untied shoelace, and Harry tripped stepping back. Thunk, thunk, tumble, thunk, thunk, tumble, thunk, thunk, crack. Harry rolled, and fell down the 15 wooden stair treads about as clumsily as humanly possible, hitting his head on the oak handrail post at the bottom of the steps.

Vernon, looked down at Harry shouting, "Get up and get outside, you clumsy freak," as he walked into the bathroom.

Ten minutes later when Vernon had finished in the bathroom, Harry was still at the bottom of the stairs. "What the bloody hell? Potter get up." Harry didn't move. Vernon panicked for a moment, went into Harry's room to see if he could find one of Harry's kind to call. He didn't want a normal doctor to know anything about Harry's lot. He saw a business card on the corkboard. "Dr. Emma Granger. Must be a freak doctor." He called the emergency number.

"Hello, Lupin here."

"Mr. Lupin, this is Emma Granger, Hermione's mother. I just received a call from Vernon Dursley informing me that Harry has apparently had an accident at his home. He is breathing but unconscious. He has not been moved. Do you have a means of contacting the physician at Hogwarts, or should I contact an ambulance?"

"Mrs. Granger, don't worry. I'll contact the school healer immediately."

"Diane, it's Emma. Harry Potter has just had an accident at his home. Privet Drive is only about ten minutes from your house. Could you meet me there?"

"I'm on my way."

Within five minutes Pomfrey and Dumbledore were at the Dursley residence. Diane and Emma walked in ten minutes later. "Excellent response time Professor," said Emma.

Dumbledore effortlessly switched to muggle-speak. "We came as fast as we could. Dr. Pomfrey is examining Harry now to be certain that he can safely be moved. I am Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster at the school that Harry attends," Dumbledore said extending his hand to Dr. Turnbull.

"Your name is familiar to me sir. Perhaps you knew my grandfather, Wallace MacDonnell?"

"Not well, but I knew his father, Timothy. Excellent man," smiled Dumbledore.

"Excuse me, Professor, this is my friend and colleague Dr. Diane Turnbull. She is the psychologist that I told you about," explained Mrs. Granger

"I'm ready to move Mr. Potter now Professor," said Madam Pomfrey. "Perhaps you want to move the others outside."

"That won't be necessary Poppy. Go ahead."

She activated the portkey. With a soft pop, Harry and the healer disappeared.

“Brilliant,” laughed Diane. “I always believed that Grandpa Wallace was telling me the truth,”

“We specifically test nonmagical children of squib witches and wizards for any signs of magical ability. Unfortunately your name did not come up on our list of magical children.”

Emma said, “Professor Dumbledore, Diane is aware of Harry’s rather unique crises, and I believe she could be of help for him when he regains consciousness. Perhaps it would be in Harry’s best interest if she could visit with him again soon.”

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled. “Dr. Granger, I think that’s a wonderful idea. When we have a better idea of Harry’s condition, I’ll contact you. Our world could certainly make use of your services. We are facing difficult times right now.”

“Professor, I’d be happy to help. Here’s my card.”

Dumbledore took it, looked at it, put it in his pocket and checked his pocket watch. As he looked at each of the dozen little faces on the watch, he seemed pleased with what he saw. “Thank you both for your concern. Dr. Granger, It was good to see you again. Dr. Turnbull, thank you for your generous offer. I look forward to having you with us. I will be in touch in a day or two at the most.”

With that, he turned around and disappeared.

“Sure beats the car park.”

“What do you suppose happened?”

“Just now?”

“No, with Harry.”

"I don't know Diane. How could anyone up and leave an injured child like that? That man should be a poster boy for insensitivity. Since no one's home, let's take a quick look around."

At the top of the stairs, Emma found one of Harry's old trainers, unlaced. He only had the one shoe on when they found him. "Let's look at his bedroom."

Inside they found the broken Ogden's bottle and some old clothes on the floor. Harry's new things were in the closet, neatly hung up. The mark left by the bottle hitting the headboard was clearly visible. "It would be interesting to know who drank it and who threw it," said Emma.

"Em, the kid certainly doesn't lead a pampered life. Let me make a few quick notes before we go."

"Thanks Diane. Let me buy you lunch."

"You're on. Is the Black Dog OK?"

When Harry woke up on Wednesday, he found himself at the Hogwarts hospital wing in the company of Madam Pomfrey, the school healer.

"Hello Mr. Potter. How is my favorite patient today? I do enjoy your company my child, but I must confess that I wasn't expecting to see you for another six to eight weeks."

Harry was still confused. "How did I get here?"

"Your Uncle said that you'd fallen down a flight of stairs and hit your head pretty hard. You still have a cut and quite a concussion. I have given you some potions to reduce the swelling. You also had a broken wrist, but I mended that already. Your Uncle contacted the Grangers, who contacted Remus, who contacted me, and here you are." She smiled at him.

“How long have I been here?”

“You arrived here yesterday about noon. Are you hungry? I was just about to have my lunch.”

“Please, if it is not too much trouble.”

“No trouble for you my dear. Can I sit with you for a while and keep you company while we eat? It seems silly to eat in separate rooms.”

“Please. It will be a first for us.”

“Is a ham sandwich, crisps, and pumpkin juice OK?”

“That sounds great. Thank you.”

Madam Pomfrey sat by Harry's bed eating in silence. Finally she spoke first. “Harry, during World War Two, my late husband was in the Royal navy. He was a muggle who loved the sea as much as he loved me. He was one of the few English submariners. He told me that when the boat would submerge, the water pressure would increase on the hull. It was so powerful that they could tape a string from one steel bulkhead wall to the other, and see the line slacken as the boat went deeper. The water would squeeze the boat more and more the deeper that it went. If they let the boat go too deep, eventually the boat would implode from the pressure. The frightening part was, no one could say with any certainty how deep an individual submarine could go. They varied based in the quality of the construction and the degree of damage that they had sustained. No one wanted to find out the hard way.”

Harry looked on in interested silence and nodded.

She continued. “Harry, how deep is your boat? I know your school years have not been easy. You've had some fun with your friends, and your Quidditch at least when that idiot Lockhart wasn't de-boning you, but I know that a lot of things haven't been easy. You have met up with dementors, dragons, and lunatics, not to mention that idiot Umbridge. Then in your spare time you keep finding yourself face to

face with he-who-must not be named.” She paused for a second. “It doesn’t look like your summer holidays are any easier for you.”

Harry nodded. They sat in silence again, eating their sandwiches while Harry thought about what (if anything) to say. Madam Pomfrey was a friend.

“Madam Pomfrey, lately I feel almost ready to implode. Just as I thought I’ve fixed one thing in my life, two others fly up to bite me. Please call him Voldemort.”

She shuddered. “How did you fix the one thing?”

“By talking it out.”

She smiled at him, “Spot on Harry. You will need to be here for at least a few more days. Please let me know if you need anything.”

“Thanks for lunch and for the advice, Madam Pomfrey.”

She looked him in the eye. “You’re welcome, Harry. I do enjoy your company. You’re a very good listener. Please get some rest. I’m leaving you a sleeping potion to take only if you need it. I would like you to either read or rest for the remainder of the day. There’s a quill, ink, and parchment in the drawer of the stand by the side of your bed if you want to write a letter.”

“Thanks again, Madam Pomfrey. You always take great care of me. Someday perhaps I can do something for you.”

As she walked away she muttered to herself, “Harry, someday I hope you get the chance to and I pray that you will be successful. Just not today.”

After sleeping for three or four hours, Harry woke up and decided to write Hermione a letter.

Dear Hermione,

Thanks again for all of the nice stuff that you got me. I haven't had a chance to wear them too much yet, but I know that I will. Please thank your parents for contacting Madam Pomfrey for me. She informed me that I now have my own permanently reserved bed in the hospital wing. It's an odd sort of honor.

Please tell your mum that I enjoyed meeting Dr. Turnbull. She's an interesting person.

Hermione, I've told you most of my secrets, and I'm grateful that you don't hate me. You mean the world to me. However, I still have a huge secret to tell you. It wouldn't be appropriate for a letter, but I think I'm ready to talk with you about it.

Thank you for listening to me and being the best friend a guy could ever have. You are beautiful too. I think about you all of the time.

Love,

Harry

PS You have great taste in clothing too.

The next day passed quickly for Harry. Remus stopped by after dinner for a visit. He looked thin, underfed, and as always dressed in too old, but clean clothing.

"Hello Harry. It's good to see that you are on the mend."

Harry was glad to see him. "Hi Remus. Thanks for locating Madam Pomfrey for me."

"Don't mention it. I assume that you received your Gringotts letter regarding Sirius' estate. I'll meet you there Monday at 3:00 P.M."

Harry nodded.

"Harry, you may not know this, but Sirius was a pretty wealthy man. He owned Grimmauld Place, another property, his motorcycle, and a mansion full of personal property. To accommodate his rather "fluid"

legal status, he had quietly liquidated most of the family investments, so I presume that there is a fair amount of cash in his vault. There also are a lot of books in the family library that may be useful to you.”

“Harry, I wanted you to understand something about Sirius. I know that you didn’t get to spend a lot of time with him in the final months of his life. I saw him almost every day. He was seriously depressed. I think he had too much time on his hands in that house, and just couldn’t see that his life would ever be getting any better.”

He continued. “The only time that I saw him happy in the last year were the two weeks that you spent with him last Christmas.” Remus looked Harry in the eye. “I’m not saying that Sirius went out that night with the intent of not coming back, but he lived to help you. For Sirius – spending the last hour of his life being able to kick some Death Eater arse was nearly as good as it could get. You didn’t lead him to his death. Please believe that. Harry – there are bloody few people on the planet who get to die with any dignity. It’s probably not something that most sixteen year olds spend much time thinking about, but it’s true. Don’t mourn his passing too much Harry. Try to be OK with the knowledge that a really good man believed in you.”

Harry nodded. “OK. Is there anything else?”

Remus suppressed a grin. “As long as you asked, Sirius and I were going to talk with you about a few other things this summer – the sex talk, the risks of casual dating, and a few other things, but Hermione is a remarkably responsible young woman. So how about if we spare each other the embarrassment. OK?”

Harry smiled. “OK. I’ll let you off the hook this time.”

“Harry, you’re a great guy. It is an honor to know you. By the way, there is a letter on your nightstand.”

“Thanks. Goodnight Remus.”

“Goodnight Harry.”

Harry wasn’t really tired yet so he opened the letter from Neville.

Harry,

You git! I am really steamed at you. You didn't get my nose broken at the Department of Mysteries. I did that on my own when that smelly moron Crabbe smashed into me. My Dad's wand smashed because that oaf stepped on it. He couldn't even fall down properly when you stunned him!

Harry, I am kind of mad at you because you are feeling sorry for yourself. DON'T!!! I couldn't be writing you this letter telling you how mad I am if you hadn't led us safely away from all of those killers. Thank you.

At first Gran was furious that I had gotten Dad's wand smashed. Then when she read about the attack in the Prophet she changed her mind, and said that she was very proud of me for bring honor to the family. Harry, she has never told me that before.

I'm getting a new wand at Ollivanders next week. It will be cool to get one that's really fitted for me. Maybe it will be just like yours.

Harry, I'm not really mad at you. You should go easier on yourself.

See you later,

Neville

As Harry was reading his letter, Diane was reading hers.

Dear Doctor Turnbull,

Thank you for your very generous offer to talk with Harry, and hopefully help him to realize that he does not have to shoulder the weight of the entire world.

Harry has recently heard from several people who count him as a friend. I think that it also would do him well to hear from a skilled, objective outsider such as you.

The two pence coin attached to this letter will bring you to Harry this Friday at exactly 10:00 AM. It is necessary that you are holding the coin in your hand at that time. If you wish, you may bring an overnight bag, as well as any non-electrical personal or professional items that you may require. Be certain that you are holding the bag at the same time that you are holding the coin. Your preference of professional or casual attire is perfectly appropriate. We want your visit to be comfortable for you. Meals and accommodations will be provided.

Again, thank you.

Albus Dumbledore

Diane wasn't sure what to expect, but was ready for an adventure in her life. She told her husband that she would be gone for the weekend helping a friend of Hermione Granger's. She had smiled when her husband asked her if she would need a ride. She packed a few books for Harry, her notebook and a change of comfortable clothes.

At 9:55 on Friday she walked outside, and sat on her back doorstep. In one hand she held her overnight bag. In the other she held the coin that Dumbledore had given her. As the minutes passed and nothing had happened, she began to feel a bit ridiculous. Thinking that it was after 10:00, she was about to check her watch when she felt a powerful tug behind her navel. After a few seconds of indescribable sight and sound, she found herself in front of the fireplace in Dumbledore's office.

"WOW!!!"

"Good morning, Dr. Turnbull. Yes, I have heard portkey travel described in that manner before. I trust that you are well?"

"Fine. Thank you."

"Sir, (she began with significantly increased respect) where am I?"

“Diane, you are at Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where some of your ancestors were educated. The school is in north central Scotland. Please call me Albus.”

Diane looked at her watch. It read 10:05. She had just traveled hundreds of miles in less than a minute!

“A portkey sure beats travelling the London Tubes.”

“Faster perhaps, but the London underground has its own charm.”

Minerva McGonagall entered the office. “Dr. Turnbull, it’s good to see you again.”

“Professor McGonagall, good morning.”

“Minerva.”

“Diane.”

“Good. Thank you for coming to see us Diane.”

“How is Harry?”

“Physically he is largely healed. He had a few broken bones, bruises, a cut, and quite a concussion. Poppy has taken good care of him.”

“May I see him now?”

“Certainly. This way please. Dobby will bring your bag to your room.” Minerva called to Harry as they entered the Hospital Wing. “Mr. Potter, you have a very special visitor.” Minerva left them alone.

Diane Smiled at Harry, glad to see him again. “Hi, Harry. Interesting place you have here.”

Harry put down his book and smiled broadly. “Dr. Turnbull, this must be quite a house call. Thanks for coming. Are the Grangers here as well?”

“No. I just thought I’d pop in to see you myself. Wow. You folks really have this transportation stuff done well. Portkeys are amazing.”

“I never really have gotten used to magical travel. I’ve had my share of problems with portkeys,” he said darkly.

“Harry, may I sit?”

“For a bit. Then maybe we could walk outside if you don’t mind. I haven’t been out much lately.”

“Harry, you look great! When I saw you on Tuesday you were cut, bruised, broken and unconscious. Now you look to be in perfect health. How did you...?”

“Magic.”

“Oh, right. I guess that makes sense. Harry, can I ask you some very frank questions?”

“Yes, but as Dumbledore would say, I reserve the right not to answer them if there is a good reason.”

“Fair enough. In kind, you can ask me anything that you wish with the same condition.” Diane smiled, and her blue eyes met his. “To start off with, how did you fall down the stairs?”

“I was arguing with my uncle, and somehow I tripped backward. I remember falling down a few of the stairs. The next thing I knew, I was in my bed here.”

Diane’s experienced ear detected no sense of evasion in his voice. “What happened in your room?”

“I made the mistake of tossing an empty Ogden’s fire whisky bottle in the kitchen dustbin. Apparently uncle Vernon wasn’t too impressed with it. He threw it at me that morning.”

It was rare to find a teen who so readily owned up to a situation. Emma had been right - His Uncle was a sad excuse for a parent.

“The bottle throwing incident aside, do you have a decent relationship with your aunt and uncle?”

“No. It’s been a lifetime of intimidation and neglect. There have been the little things like never getting proper clothing, or just getting enough food to live on. After I found out that I was a wizard, it has generally been worse. One summer they wouldn’t let me out of my room, hence all the locks on the door and the cat-flap for food. The last few summers were a bit better. We mostly just stayed out of each other’s way.”

“I’m sorry that they did not treat you as well as you deserved. When you grow up to be an adult wizard, how do you see yourself? What do you want to be?”

Harry sat in comfortable silence for a minute. He enjoyed talking with her. “I hope to live long enough to graduate from Hogwarts. If I get that far, I’d like to see about becoming an Auror. They’re something like the criminal investigation unit at Scotland Yard.”

“Who would be in your life?”

“Hermione, Neville, Ginny, Ron, Luna, Remus, and others I guess.”

“How do you see getting from where you are to where you want to be?”

“I can’t say.”

“You’re not sure?”

“No, I’m not allowed to talk about it.”

At that moment Professor Dumbledore walked in, carrying Harry’s Firebolt. “Harry, I think it is time that you got this back. Perhaps you could show Dr. Turnbull how it is used.”

Diane thought that an odd thing to say and her puzzlement showed. ‘Why would he care about a sweeping broom?’

Seeing her expression, Professor Dumbledore said, “Dr. Turnbull, Harry has a special affinity with this broom. Please let him show you.”

Dumbledore continued, “Poppy, something has come up.” He looked at her sharply. “I will be unexpectedly gone for at least the rest of the afternoon. If you see Remus, please have him contact me at the house.”

She nodded, concerned at his cryptic message.

“Harry, I trust that you will continue to be completely open with your guest. Dinner will be at six in the small dining hall. Dobby will help you with the selections. Please show her around the castle and grounds as you continue your visit.”

“OK Professor.” Dumbledore left and Poppy went back to her office.

Harry and Diane left the hospital wing and walked through the halls and the stairways of the castle. Many of the talking paintings greeted them as they walked by. Diane had the “Deer in the headlights” amazed look that Harry had seen on every new first year. He’d originally attributed it just to being eleven years old. Now he came to realize that it was the magnificence of Hogwarts castle. They walked out past the great oak doors. After a few paces, Diane turned around. Only one word made it out of her mouth – “Wow!!!”

They walked down to the Quidditch stadium. Diane commented that the seats were quite high up for watching football. Harry agreed and set his broom on the ground. He motioned for Diane to stand beside him.

“Watch this. Up.” The broom rose 2 ½ feet into the air and hovered motionless. Harry mounted the broom and invited Diane to get on behind him, like a passenger on a motorbike. Diane got on, and put her arms loosely around Harry’s waist. “You might want to hold on a bit tighter.”

Harry leaned forward and they rose into the air. Harry didn’t have to ask Dr. Turnbull to hold on tight twice. With images of Halloween witches in mind, Diane could not believe that she was flying in a

sports stadium on the back of a broomstick. It was fantastic, silently moving through the air. They flew three laps around the stadium, flying level with the seats before descending and stopping.

“Wow!!!”

“Yup, that word about covers broomsticks too.”

“Thank you, Harry. That was amazing.” She hugged him.

Harry smiled at her. “I like flying. It is one of the few chances for me to relax. I love the feel of the breeze through my hair, and the quiet.”

Diane nodded, not saying anything.

“Dr. Turnbull, I live in two completely different worlds. During the year, I’m known as the-boy-who-lived, and am usually treated like some sort of celebrity for surviving an attack when I was about a year old. Most people never see past their magazine image of me. Depending on circumstance, they see me as a hero, the answer to all of their problems, a deranged nutter, a suspected evil wizard, or just an attention grabbing git.”

“And Hermione?”

“Harry smiled and his eyes twinkled. “Hermione is the anchor in my life. She is one of the few people who chooses to look past the scar on my face, and sees me, just Harry. She always believes in me, and has always stood by me, no matter what happens, or what the papers say.”

“I think you two are good for each other. You probably help her in a lot of ways too. What about the rest of the year?”

“Every summer, I am forced to go live with my aunt and uncle. They treat me like a dog that has rolled in something stinky - unwelcome, unfed, and unloved. As they say, I was landed on their front step, and have made their life miserable each day since. I thought things might be better since I saved Dudley’s life last summer, but nothing has

really changed. There isn't much that I could do to please them, except leave."

"What keeps you there?"

"When my mother was killed, she cast some type of spell that would help protect me as long as I was in the care of my blood relatives. I need to stay there most of each summer to renew the magic."

"And the broken liquor bottle?"

"Doctor in all honesty, I have to take responsibility for that. The bottle had been given to me a few weeks ago. I finished it last week, and threw it in the kitchen dustbin where my uncle found it. His communication style regarding underage drinking was to throw it at me."

"How did drinking make you feel?"

"Like I hurt just a bit less."

Diane considered what he said for a moment. "Harry, I don't have any experience with wizard liquor. What are you telling me?"

Harry was walking Diane down to the edge of the lake. He pulled a small loaf of bread out of one of the pockets of his robe. "Take a piece of this bread, ball it up, and throw it into the water, as far as you can. Now watch."

Diane did as she was asked. A half a minute later, a gigantic squid tentacle rose above the surface of the lake, grabbed the bread, and submerged. Diane's eye grew wide with shock at what she had just seen.

"Diane, there are monsters in my life. Some are real like that squid, some I have put there myself. I'm beginning to recognize the monsters, and with help, I'm starting to sort out the ones that I have placed in my head. Does that make sense?"

She nodded. "Harry, I don't know if anyone has ever told you, but you really are a great young man. You will make progress. In time you will feel better. You have some very unique challenges, but you have a bigger heart and more strength of character than most. It's within you to face your doubts. Let the people who care for you most like the Grangers help you."

They walked for a while. Finally Diane said, "On a different subject, can we get something to eat?"

Harry picked up his broom and grinned at her. "Come on, let's walk back. You're going to love house elves."

They spent most of that evening, and part of the next morning talking about both ordinary things, and Harry's issues, getting to know each other better. Finally Remus arrived, and announced that it was time for Diane to return to Crawley. "Dr. Turnbull, patient confidentiality will be uniquely important in this situation."

"As with all of my patients, Mr. Lupin. There will be no reports going to anyone. Anything that was discussed is Harry's alone to keep for himself or repeat."

Holding Harry's shoulders Diane said, "Harry, it's been one of my life's dreams to understand the stories that my Grandfather told me. Spending the weekend in this castle has made me feel much more connected to him. Thanks for sharing your world with me. I'd like to visit with you again sometime."

Harry took her outstretched hand. "You're welcome and thank you, Dr. Turnbull. I hope to see you again soon."

Before he left, Remus told Harry that Professor Dumbledore needed to speak with him in the headmaster's office.

"I'm sorry that I wasn't able to visit with you this week, Harry. I had a lot of unavoidable meetings straightening things out with the school board of governors and the ministry. Fortunately their attitudes have

changed for the better given Lucius Malfoy's rather publicized imprisonment, and Tom's very public appearance. Fudge was also forced to significantly change his position on a number of issues."

Dumbledore steered the conversation in the direction that he had intended, "You had some other visitors this week however. I hope that you managed to keep busy."

"Yes Professor. Madam Pomfrey has taken very good care of me, and Mrs. Granger seems to have adopted me as one of her projects. She has taken me out for lunch a few times to get to know me and talk with me. Hermione bought me some nice clothes to wear. I got a letter from Neville. Remus stopped by to see me, and you know about Dr. Turnbull."

"I expect that she found you to be quite as interesting a person, as you found her to be. I believe that her weekend here may have filled in one of the gaps in her life. If you don't mind my asking, what did you two talk about?" He offered Harry a tray of sandwiches that Dobby had made.

"We talked about the monsters in my life. I know that fate and circumstance have placed a few of them there for me, but I have started to realize that I may be needlessly holding some there myself. I've carried Cedric's death around for a year. I have come to realize that I did not kill him. Pettigrew killed him on Voldemort's command."

"Precisely."

Harry paused for a moment to collect his thoughts. "Hermione says that I'm slow to forgive myself. I suppose she's right."

"Harry, learning about yourself doesn't mean that you need to change everything. Learning about yourself will help you grow and move on from the things that cannot be changed.

They sat in silence for a moment eating their sandwiches.

"Harry, are you certain that the incident with your uncle was an accident? Please think carefully."

“Yes Professor, I tripped on my own shoelace.”

“That’s an excellent reason to own a good pair of boots, Harry. Professor McGonagall and I took the liberty of finding you a pair of dragon hide boots that should serve you well. They are not as flashy as something that the Weasley twins might select, but like yourself, they have an understated elegance.”

“Thank you, Professor. I really like them.” Harry took off the pair of trainers that he had borrowed from the school lost and found, and put on the new boots.

“Think nothing of it Harry.”

“I also understand that you have made the acquaintance of Ogden’s. Is that a friend that you need to have?”

“No sir. I was feeling so bad about Hermione getting hurt, and Sirius. I just wish he had stayed home that night.” Tears had welled in his eyes.

Dumbledore looked at Harry for a moment, and framed his answer. “Suppose Sirius had stayed home. By the time I arrived, Alastor was on the ground looking for his eye and Tonks had been beaten by Bellatrix. Shacklebolt was down, leaving you and Remus at no better than a standoff against Lucius, Jugson, and Nott. Dolohov and Bellatrix would have certainly killed Tonks, Alastor, and your friend Miss Granger. Harry, Voldemort’s followers are all killers. They wouldn’t have blinked before taking the life of everyone there. You don’t seriously believe that Lucius would have let you all go?” Harry shook his head, knowing that Dumbledore was right.

He continued. “Tom has lied to, deceived, and tricked hundreds, perhaps thousands of sensible witches and wizards in the more than fifty years that I have known him. Surely you don’t think less of Arthur Weasley because Tom’s snake attacked him? You don’t think less of Cedric because Pettigrew murdered him, do you?”

“No sir.”

Dumbledore softened his voice. "Harry, inexperience will allow you to get into situations that you may know to avoid later on in life. Once you find yourself in one of those situations, your quick thinking, leadership, and tactical awareness shine through brilliantly. I cannot honestly say that as a fifteen-year-old wizard that I would have done as well as you if I had found myself in the same situation. I was six times older than you when I found myself tested as you have these last few years."

He continued. "Harry, I also wanted to talk with you about your wonderful defense group. Now that it doesn't need to be so secret, I was hoping that you would consider having it as a school sponsored club. I was also hoping that you and Miss Granger would consider leading it again."

Harry smiled. "I'd like that professor, and I'm certain that Hermione would too."

Harry put down his pumpkin juice. "Professor, I need to talk with you about a few things. First, I'm sorry that I got you sacked last term for two months. I'm also very sorry that I wrecked your office that night. I know that you have forgiven me, but I needed to say it."

"Harry, you are slow to forgive yourself. Miss Granger has the ability to see you both for the wonderful person that you are, and the person that you can be. You would do well to always at least consider her advice. With respect to beverages, I prefer cocoa to Ogden's myself. I have found it to be a less destructive means of relaxing myself. With regards to Fudge giving me a few weeks time off, I must admit that it was a refreshing change. Please don't give it another thought."

"Harry, the next few years are likely to be very difficult. As much as possible, try to be a forgiver. It will make it that much easier for you to forgive yourself, for real, or imagined errors. I believe that you have several appointments scheduled for tomorrow. Is that your understanding?"

Harry nodded.

“Remus has offered to escort you to the Ministry. Are you comfortable with him?”

“Yes Professor. We get along really well.”

Dumbledore nodded. “He’s a good man, Harry. You have developed a very good set of friends. They’ll serve you well in your life if you let them. You and Remus doubtless will have some things to discuss after your meeting at Gringotts. You won’t have to finalize any decisions at that time, but you two should talk.”

Dumbledore had another sip of his cocoa. “Also when you have the time to arrange it, you should consider disclosing the details of the prophecy with Miss Granger. She has always stood by you in the past, and unless I’m much mistaken, has offered to for the future.”

Harry’s face turned beet red.

Dumbledore smiled at his young friend. “It has been my experience that she can keep a secret. Her experience with the time turner should prove that for you.”

“One last thing Harry,” said Dumbledore, no longer smiling. “I believe that you will be requested to present your Gringotts key tomorrow. I took the liberty of obtaining it from your uncle’s house yesterday. I also packed your trunk for you. You will not be required to spend the rest of the summer there like I had originally told you.”

Dumbledore concluded. “I need to meet with Severus now. You of course are welcome to join us, but you’re not required to do so, if you have other things to do. We can talk more later.”

Harry stood up to leave. “No. Thank you professor. I have a book to finish. Thank you for lunch, and the new boots. I really like them.”

“I will mention that to professor McGonagall. Enjoy your day Harry.”

“Thanks again.”

Harry and Snape nodded at each other while passing in the doorway, without saying anything. Snape closed the door.

“Good afternoon Severus. Were you able to find any information?”

“The Dark Lord spoke nothing about it sir. I don’t believe that he even knows about it yet. It appears to simply have been an accident. Have you told Potter?”

“No I decided to wait. Harry has a hard day ahead of him tomorrow, and I didn’t want to distract him.”

Snape was a bit surprised that Potter hadn’t been told, but asked, “Does anyone else know of the investigation?”

“No. I want to thank you again for looking into this Severus. It has the potential to change a lot of things for Harry.”

“Potter’s problems are his own sir. I need to take my leave now. I have some lacewings to blend into a potion that I am brewing.”

“Good day, Severus.”

“Yes Headmaster. I’ll see you in a week.”

Dumbledore sipped his cocoa. Fawkes flew to his knee. “Indeed,” he said to the beautiful bird. “Life will never be the same for Harry. Hopefully he will see it as better.”

On Monday at 9:00 AM Harry was shown into Director Bones’ office. The crisp diction of Amelia Bones Director of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement grabbed Harry’s attention. “Mr. Potter, may I have your wand please?” For a moment, Harry wondered if he would ever see it again. Then he remembered Emma’s’ advice that this was a friendly fact finding meeting. Senior Auror Shacklebolt placed a yellow EVIDENCE tape on the edge of Harry’s wand, marked Harry James Potter in the owner field and set it in the table. There were nearly a dozen other wands there, each identified with

the owner and date of seizure. One of the wands was broken. Harry recognized it as Frank Longbottom's old wand.

"Senior Auror Shacklebolt, Auror Tonks, please leave your wands on the table too. We don't want any accidental use of magic in this room." Tonks blushed. "Mr. Potter, please tell me what happened that night."

Harry described the events of that evening, much the same as he had written to Hermione. He did not mention casting a failed Cruciatus curse at Bellatrix in the lobby.

"Senior Auror Shacklebolt, is Mr. Potter's description of the events consistent with the evidence that you found in the Department of Mysteries rooms on level nine."

Kingsley looked at her and flashed a glance at Harry. "Yes, Director Bones."

"Auror Tonks is your recollection of the evening consistent with Mr. Potter's statement?"

"Yes, Director Bones."

"Auror Tonks, you are excused. Please wait in the outer office for a few minutes."

"Excuse us for a few minutes, will you Senior Auror Shacklebolt?" Kingsley replied that he would return in 15 minutes. He left and closed the door behind him.

Amelia considered everything that Harry had told her and made her decision. She looked Harry in the eye as she spoke. "Mr. Potter, there are two documents on the table behind you. One is an arrest warrant for you, charging you with the use of an illegal curse directed against Bellatrix Lestrange. We have yet to test your wand using the Priori Incantatem test, which can conclusively identify the last spell that your wand has performed. Since you are an underage wizard, it is my expectation that your wand has not been used since June 28. Is that correct, Mr. Potter?"

Harry nodded an affirmation.

“Mr. Potter, are you familiar with the Cruciatus curse?”

“Mr. Potter, are you familiar with the Cruciatus curse?”

Harry nodded again. He’d had it cast upon himself a few times, and had unsuccessfully attempted to cast it once himself against Bellatrix.

“Do you understand the reasoning behind the penalties that have been imposed against the use of the Cruciatus curse against another human being?”

Harry nodded.

She continued. “Half of witches or wizards subjected to this level of pain for more than two minutes develop long term effects. After four minutes 90 develop nerve paralysis lasting a year or more, even with our newest treatments. We currently know of two witches and wizards who were subjected for over thirty minutes. They have exhibited over fifteen years of persistent vegetative behavior. Do you know of them Mr. Potter?”

“I’ve met Neville’s parents,” replied Harry preparing himself for the sledgehammer that he felt ready to strike him.

Bones sipped her tea. “The complicating factor in your case is the lack of a witness. It seems that Ms. LeStrange failed to answer the invitation that we sent her to interview her regarding her version of the events of the evening of 28 June. As such, there is no formal complaint filed, only circumstantial evidence based upon your as yet untested wand.”

“The other document that I have on the table behind you is a temporary conditional use of magic license. It would authorize you to use magic in situations where an adult wizard would be authorized to use magic, valid until your seventeenth birthday. These would include daily household activities, including transfiguration of inanimate objects, charms such as carrying objects from one place to another, and the creation of light magic potions. The use of hexes and curses used in an unprovoked offensive situation is specifically prohibited. Use of defensive light magic would of course be permitted.”

Harry nodded, not believing his good luck.

"The granting of the license is of course conditional. You need to be free of any criminal felony level magical charges at the time of its issuance. I also need your word Mr. Potter, your wizard's pledge that you will not go looking for trouble." She smiled for an instant. "It finds you easily enough as it is. Finally Mr. Potter, I have one last condition. I need you to at least consider my personal invitation to enter the Auror training program after school and the successful attainment of NEWT level certifications in Charms, Transfiguration, Defense, and one other class of your choosing."

Harry couldn't believe his ears. No charges, a magic license, and a personal invitation into the Auror program. Christmas indeed had come early! "I accept. Thank you Director Bones."

"Harry please ask Auror Tonks to come back in and close the door again."

"Auror Tonks, please help me move this bookcase over a few feet." Tonks walked over to the table and picked up her wand. With a swish and flick movement that reminded Harry of another young lady, she said Wingardium Leviosa, and moved the bookcase two feet to the left. Tonks put her wand back on the table. "Auror Tonks, I changed my mind, would you move it back please." Tonks repeated the wand movement and the bookcase floated back to its original location.

Tonks put the wand back in her wrist holster. It didn't fit. She pulled it out again to examine it. "Sorry, Director Bones, I must have used the wrong wand to move the bookcase."

"Auror Tonks, you are suspended without pay for two weeks for the unintentional tampering with evidence in a criminal investigation. The loss of pay is the only penalty in this case. This action will not impact your future career opportunities within the department. Put the other wand back on the table and wait outside."

"Yes, Director Bones. Sorry again. Thank you, Director Bones."

"Auror Tonks, send in Auror Jones and Senior Auror Shacklebolt."

“Auror Jones, please perform the Priori Incantatem test on each of the wands on the table and record the results.”

Wand marked property of Ronald Mulciber - Portus

Wand marked property of Anton Dolohov – Flame cutter

Wand marked property of Augustus Rookwood – Avada Kedavra

Wand marked property of Waldon McNair – Avada Kedavra

Wand marked property of Stephen Rabastian - Imperious

Wand marked property of Peter Crabbe – Jelly legs

Wand marked property of Andrew Rodolphus - Reducto

Wand marked property of Gregory Jugson - Cruciatus

Wand marked property of Stephen Nott – Avada Kedavra

Wand marked property of Lucius Malfoy – Avada Kedavra

Wand marked property of Harry James Potter - Wingardium Leviosa.

Wand marked property of Neville Longbottom - Inoperable

“Thank you Auror Jones. Please file the report on the wand tests.”

“Yes Director Bones.”

Amelia Bones got up and walked to the table behind Harry. She signed her name to the document and handed it to Harry. She burned the other document, and made the ashes vanish.

“Lunch is ready in the conference room across the hall.”

Kingsley, Tonks Harry, and Amelia sat in that order around a round table. Sandwiches, coffee and tea were on the table. Percy left and closed the door.

Amelia started, "Harry, this lunch is informal and off the record. You can ask any questions, and answer any questions freely without any consequences. I have two questions for you, then you may ask anything that you wish. My first question is how did you find yourself needing to get to the Department of Mysteries in the first place? My second question is how did you make it out without any serious injuries?"

Harry decided to be completely candid with her. "Voldemort had been planting visions of the Department of Mysteries in my dreams for a month or so. At the same time he was trying to use others to steal a prophecy that had my name on it. It never occurred to him that I knew nothing about it, and couldn't connect the dreams to any location that I knew of. The afternoon of 28 June, he planted a vision that my Godfather had been taken there and was being tortured. The short of it was that there was no one available at school who could help me, so I decided to go alone. The other students insisted on following me."

Amelia nodded. Tonks and Shacklebolt remained motionless in rapt attention.

"Leading to the second question, once I got to the location where I believed Sirius to be, we saw a sphere with my name on it. After I picked it up, the Death Eaters appeared. I don't know where or how they were hiding. None of us had seen them earlier. Malfoy and Bellatrix talked for a minute trying to get me to give it to them. I didn't have any idea what it was, but knew that if they wanted it, they probably shouldn't be allowed to have it. I whispered to Hermione to create a diversion on my command, she whispered to the others while Bellatrix was spewing her trash. We knocked over a shelf. I think it fell on McNair. We started running in different directions."

Harry sipped his coffee. "That was as far as we planned, so the six of us were split up. I had downed four or five of the Death Eaters in the next fifteen minutes, but I didn't know how to keep them down, so they kept coming back. At that point my only goal was to get everyone out alive."

Amelia listened to his story for a moment, having increased respect for the young man sitting across from her eating his sandwich. "Harry, you did remarkably well given that you were on no where near a level playing field with them. You were trying to stun a bunch of killers with the best tools that you possessed. Kingsley and Tonks would probably agree that you possess excellent leadership skills, and think remarkably quick on your feet."

Kingsley spoke up. "The Death Eaters were probably expecting you to come alone, and set the odds for the match overwhelmingly in their favor, twelve against one. However, beyond grabbing the prophecy, and probably kidnapping or killing you, it doesn't appear that they had an alternative plan. I'm presuming that you ran from room to room using cover as you could until you were forced into the arena of the death chamber where we met you. Amelia, I doubt that many of our current Aurors would have done as well, let alone better. Harry, you did the best that you could with what you had to work with."

Tonks spoke up. "The Death Eaters are certainly ruthless, but they aren't soldiers. Once their initial plan had been broken, their next plan should have been containment and capture. Splitting themselves into a half dozen groups showed how little concern they had that any of you posed a serious threat. They were wrong. While it would have been destruction of evidence, the only thing that I could have seen you doing was to snap their wands, once you had them stunned. I'm surprised that they weren't carrying spare wands."

Amelia nodded, "Good observations, both of you. Hopefully everyone here can learn something from this for next time. Harry, what can we tell you?"

"How many Death Eaters do you think there are? A year ago, I ran into about thirty of them."

Amelia shivered at the thought of what he had just said. "I wish that we knew for sure. The group that created the breakout from Azkaban was estimated to be from twenty-five to thirty. Voldemort can't really run a position offered advertisement in the Prophet, so I assume that they are quietly recruiting members. To answer your question, probably from thirty to forty net of the ten that you helped capture."

Amelia got up to conclude the lunch. "Harry, you have another appointment soon, so we should probably get going. Your objective was to get you and your five friends out alive. You accomplished that objective, and should be happy about that."

Harry, Tonks and Director Bones walked to the lobby past the fountain of magical brethren. It had not yet been repaired. The yellow and black crime scene tape still marked off the area. Tonks excused herself to go to the WC.

"Harry, there is a wizard's debt to be paid out of this."

"I understand. I'll..."

"No Harry. Mine to you. You succeeded in something that my department was unable to do for the last year. You exposed the return of Voldemort to the wizarding world and helped capture ten Death Eaters."

"At a cost of a life."

"Harry these are dangerous times. My department averages three injuries per every two captures. One in three captures during the last war resulted in the death of an Auror. Death Eaters never come in quietly, but I need to improve on that ratio. There have been twenty-three deaths this year that we attribute to Voldemort's Death Eaters. Actually the number is twenty-four, including the death of your Godfather." She looked him in the eye. "Harry, I am sorry for your loss. Dumbledore has pleaded Black's innocence several times with me over the last two years. I promise that I will take posthumous action if Pettigrew is ever found. Harry, please remember that seven of the Death Eaters captured last week are convicted or charged killers. Dolohov wasn't trying to tattoo your friend Hermione. He was trying to cause her a slow, extremely painful death. How many other lives do you think would have been lost if those men were still out on the street?"

Tears were welling in Harry's eyes.

She held his arm. "Harry, I owe you a debt for the help that you have given my Grand-niece Susan. Their house was attacked the night after you all returned from school and Susan was able to hold off her attackers until help arrived. She attributed her success directly to the training that you had given her. I'll have a set of Auror training books sent to you when school starts. Use good judgement with the information in them."

They looked at each other, and nodded in understanding. Harry wiped his face with his sleeve. A minute later, Tonks rejoined them.

"Auror Tonks, please escort Mr. Potter out of the building and to his appointment at Gringotts."

"Yes Director Bones. I'll see you in two weeks."

"Thank you for lunch, Director Bones."

"Anytime, Mr. Potter. Remember, we have another appointment in two years."

"Yes, Director Bones."

As they were walking the three blocks to Gringotts, Tonks poked Harry in the side and said "Harry, you owe me 192 galleons for two weeks pay. I hate to bring it up, but I don't have a lot of extra money."

"You got it. I'll transfer it to your vault this afternoon. Thanks, Tonks."

"No worries, kid. Thank you."

The time at Gringotts went by like a blur for Harry. Tonks and Harry met Remus in the lobby. Tonks said that she would wait for them to finish their business. Remus and Harry were escorted into the office of one of the Estate Officers, Griphook. He was the goblin that Harry had met several years ago the first year when Hagrid took Harry to Gringotts.

The documentation regarding the Will seemed endless. Griphook produced deeds, charts, spreadsheets and Sirius' death certificate.

The Will was read, but Harry really wasn't listening. He was remembering Ron telling Harry that Sirius must have really loved him to live off eating rats the year of the tri-wizard tournament.

"Are there any questions Mr. Potter?" asked Griphook, drawing Harry's attention back into the room.

"Sir, could you briefly summarize it for me again?"

"Harry Potter, after taxes, you will receive 2,000,384 Galleons, title to a 1969 Triumph motorbike, and a small property in Crawley. 1,000,000 Galleons and the title to the Grimmauld Place property go to Remus Lupin. The two of you are to split or distribute Sirius's personal property as you see fit."

Harry nodded.

"Do either of you have any questions? Good. Let's proceed. The two of you need to sign here, here, here, here, there, there, here, here, here, and there. Good. Mr. Lupin if you would wait outside, I have a few minutes of additional business with Mr. Potter."

Remus indicated that he would wait in the lobby.

"Mr. Potter, we have a few more documents that need your signature." Harry looked at the small card. It was a Learning Drivers Motorcycle License indicating that Harry had passed the test. The other document was a certification of insurance.

"But sir, I'm not quite old enough." Harry reread the documents. His birthday had been misdated by two years.

"Consider it to be an early birthday gift from your Godfather and your friends at Gringotts. Please drive carefully, Mr. Potter. You can bring them back in a few years and have them corrected. We want you to be our customer for many, many years. Good luck."

"Thank you sir."

Harry excused himself to attend some business with one of the counter goblins. Tonks asked Harry to wait in the lobby while she was escorted to her vault to get some money.

Ten minutes later, she walked up to him looking dumbstruck. "Harry I went to my vault to get my rent money, only to find that someone had just transferred 1 million 192 galleons into my account!"

"An interesting amount Tonks. As someone once told me, "Use it well."

Her blue eyes met his emerald ones. "You didn't have to do that. Thanks Harry."

"You risked your career to save me today Tonks. It was the least I could do."

"No problem kiddo. I need to floo you and Remus back to Hogwarts now."

On Tuesday Remus took Harry to see his home in Crawley. Sirius had purchased the property right out of Hogwarts, but had never lived there. The description that Griphook had given him indicated that the building on Barnfield road had a neighborhood muggle pub on the street level with a living area above the pub. The 1,600 square foot living area had never been occupied. The pub area had been leased to a tenant for many years, and generated a modest monthly income that more than covered the expenses of the taxes and upkeep for the entire building.

Remus drove down the A2219 and turned left on Barnfield road. After about a half mile, he parked the car across from the pub. Harry got out of the car and a huge smile pasted itself on his face. The Black Dog pub. Over the front of the pub hung a red painted sign with a picture of a shaggy black dog. They walked into the building and climbed the back stairs to the living area. Harry used the key to unlock the heavy oak door. The living area had a kitchen, bathroom, two bedrooms and an open area with a fireplace. The open area was

well lighted, as there were fourteen windows across the street side. The polished oak floor gave the space a very homey look. Since it was a muggle building, there were electric lights, and outlets.

As the place was empty, they would need to get some furniture. "Harry, before we think about furnishing the place, let's have lunch."

They ordered their lunch in the pub downstairs. The food was good, and Tim the barman was friendly. Remus looked unusually serious. "Harry, I need to talk with you about something."

"Sure Remus, what's up?"

"While you were at Hogwarts last week, your aunt and cousin were involved in a car accident on the M4 motorway. Apparently they were driving back from London, and smashed into a lorry that was stopped on the road. They both were killed. Their funeral was held on Monday when you were seeing Director Bones."

"Bullocks."

"And then some. As such there's no real reason for you to return to Privet Drive. All of the protection that was afforded you there was based on your aunt and cousin being there and has dissipated. As Vernon Dursley never adopted you, you find yourself more or less without a legal guardian."

"More or less?"

"Last month Sirius asked me if I would look out for you in the event that he was unable to. I gave him my wizard's oath that I would do my best. The choice is up to you, and you have a few options. If that doesn't sound..."

Harry grinned at him, "Thanks Remus. That would be brilliant! Where should we live?"

Remus looked relieved. He'd had serious doubts that Harry would want him around. "Well, you really have a little more than a month left before school this year, and then there is next summer. My own

cottage in Nottingham is too small. That really leaves you options of staying here or Grimmauld Place. The full moon is this weekend, but after that, I would be happy to help.”

“Remus, if you wouldn’t mind, I’d rather stay here. There are too many memories at the other place, and running into Snape usually ruins my day.”

“I hear you.”

“The Grangers invited me to stay for the weekend. It sounds like the timing might work pretty well.”

“OK. I’ll let the Order know where you are so someone can be assigned to guard you. My owl is in the back of the car if you want to send Hermione a note. Harry quickly wrote a note.

Dear Hermione,

Yes I would like to stay at your house for the weekend. Could I come sometime Friday? I have a lot of news and most of it is good. Can you give me driving directions from London? Remus can drive me.

Love,

Harry

Harry went back to the car, and gave the owl the note. “Please wait for a reply, as she doesn’t have her own owl. Thanks.” The owl flew into the air.

Remus paid Tim and they walked back up to the stairs to Harry’s new home. Looking around the space, Remus commented on the quality of the space. “Harry, you are starting with an empty canvas here. You should take your time and think about what type and style of furnishings you want. Some of the stuff we could transfigure, or bring over from Grimmauld Place, but you have a few days of shopping ahead of you too. Perhaps the Grangers could help you pick out the basics. Hermione seems to have excellent taste.”

On cue, Harry's face turned red. He nodded.

Surprisingly quickly, Remus's owl was tapping on the window. Harry opened the window and took the note from the little owl.

Harry,

Anytime Friday is fine. I will be home. Driving directions are as follows.

From London take the M23 motorway into Crawley. Take the A2219 to Barnfield road going left. Make a right onto Wollborough road for ¼ mile till you get to Cobbs Crescent. We are the first house on the right.

I miss you Harry, and I hope to see you soon.

Love,

Hermione

Harry glanced at the note and handed it to Remus. Remus took it and told Harry that they needed to go to Grimmauld Place for a few days.

Remus and Harry stepped up to the door at Number 12 Grimmauld Place, unlocked the door and walked in.

"Harry, if you would like we can make a list of our friends who knew Sirius and go through the house to find an item to give to each of them to remember Sirius by."

Harry nodded. The task of sorting through everything seemed overwhelming.

"If there are items that we don't want, we can either give them away, leave them for the Order's use, or get Mundungus Fletcher to sell them on our behalf for a good price. You don't need to feel guilty about that. Remember Sirius only grew up here. He didn't personally purchase most of these things and had no particular attachment to 95 of the stuff in this house."

It took a few days to go through each of the rooms, the basements, the garage, and the attic. Harry asked what they should do with the glassware, china, goblets and the silver service that had the Black crest on them.

“Harry, I have led a very simple life. I have no use or desire for such things, and having the silver in the house would not be a good choice for me. You may decide to keep it as is, transfigure them to have the Potter crest, or we could ask Mundungus to sell them. You don’t need to decide today or even this year.”

“Remus, I am kind of overwhelmed by all of this right now. I’ve lived most of my life either in a dark cupboard or a 6 x 8 room at the Dursleys. We’re splitting up an estate worth millions, and I only have three shirts that fit me. Before Hermione bought me those things last week, I didn’t even have a pair of decent underwear. We don’t need most of this stuff. Let’s sell most of what you or the Order won’t need. There are a lot of people out there who are getting hurt in this war and could use some help.”

Remus was impressed with Harry’s attitude. He really was a well-grounded young man. “Harry, you’re right. We could establish the Sirius Black Victims Relief Fund, and help put some lives back together again. It would be a pretty good legacy for Sirius. I’m certain that he’d approve.”

Harry nodded. “Some of the jewelry looked pretty valuable. If it’d be OK with you, we could sell most of it.”

“OK, but I want to select something each for Molly, Tonks, Ginny, Hermione, and Mrs. Granger. There are some loose diamonds that would work”

“That would be great. Could we find something for Diane, Madam Pomfrey and Professor McGonagall too?”

Remus nodded. “Of course. Good idea.”

“What does the property list look like so far?”

Wine cellar – Moody

Collection of muggle weapons – Shackbolt

Black family tree tapestry – Donate to Hogwarts

Painting of Mrs. Black – Burn

Furniture – Keep with the house for use by the Order

House elf heads - Burn

Sirius' clothing – Remus

Pensive – Harry

Books – Harry/Hermione/Remus

Potions equipment and ingredients – Donate to Hogwarts

Artwork – Sell/Allocate the proceeds between the Weasleys & Victims Relief Fund

Mrs. Blacks belongings – Sell/Proceeds to be used by the Order

Loose diamonds –
Molly/Ginny/Tonks/Hermione/Emma/Diane/Poppy/Minerva

Other Jewelry – Sell/Sirius Black Victims Relief Fund

Collection of magical weapons – Decide later

Piano - Remus

Liquor cabinet - Mundungus

“Harry, I'd like you to sell the china, glassware, and the silver and keep the money for your use.”

“Remus, I’m not going to defeat Voldemort with an even bigger bank account.

“You’re right. Having a war chest could help if Shacklebolt’s home or the Weasleys’ burrow were to be destroyed tonight. It will be a lot easier to get witches and wizards to join our side if doing so didn’t potentially cost them everything in the event of a loss. Your parent’s home was completely destroyed in the last war, and there wasn’t a similar fund to help rebuild it. Most witches and wizards don’t bother to acquire muggle insurance for their homes. In most cases, 10,000 galleons could really help put their lives back together.”

Remus continued. “If you’re not willing to take the proceeds from those items, I did find Sirius’ emergency travel fund this morning. It is in Pound Sterling bills, so you should be able to spend it looking for furniture and things that you will need. Please at least take it, as a housewarming gift.”

“OK. Are you sure about each of the distribution decisions? I am.”

“Me too. I’ll get Mundungus on it tomorrow after I take you to Hermione’s house.”

“Remus?”

Anticipating the question, Remus replied, “I will go shopping for more clothing next week, if you will too.”

“Agreed, although we may end up shopping at different clothiers. I’m not sure that either one of us would care to look like Gred and Forge matching twins.”

“Understated elegance, Harry. Understated elegance.”

Friday afternoon Emma opened the door and waved to Remus, as he drove off. “Harry, you’re certainly looking better than the last time that I saw you.”

"Thank you Mrs. Granger. I feel a lot better now."

"Hermione is in the kitchen making dinner. She wanted it to be a surprise and do it herself. She will be out in a few minutes."

"God save us," muttered Dan.

"We are all sorry to hear about the loss of your aunt and cousin," said Emma.

"Actually Mrs. Granger your experience with my aunt was quite typical. They never treated me like a member of their family. They made me live in the broom closet under the stairs until they found out that I was a wizard when I was eleven. It must have been quite a clever joke to them. I'm sorry when anyone dies, but they weren't my family, they were relatives. My uncle's biggest wish in life was to get me out of the house. It looks like he was granted his wish."

"Harry, what are your plans?" asked Dan.

"Sirius left me a small property that I can live at for the rest of the summer. Remus offered to stay and keep an eye on me until school starts. It's not furnished, but I'd like to get it fixed up."

"Where is it?"

"Sir, the building is on Barnfield road, not too from here. There is a pub called the Black Dog on the street level. I would live in the upper level flat."

Emma was surprised. "Diane and I had lunch there last week. That's less than a mile from here."

"Hedwig will be happy to not have to go so far to deliver letters."

"Dan looked at Harry with some concern. "Harry, you're still a student. Without trying to pry into your personal business, do you have enough money to live on? Speaking for Emma, if you need a place to live, you'd be more than welcome to stay with us."

Harry rubbed his palms on his jeans. "Mr. Granger, I can't explain how much that the kindness that your family has shown to me this summer has meant to me. I've come to realize that I was in a very bad way at the end of the school year. I allowed myself to sink into a pretty deep hole of guilt and depression. With the help of Hermione, your wife Emma, her friend Dr. Turnbull, my friend Neville, my Dad's friend Remus, and Healer Pomfrey, I can see the daylight of a happy life again."

Harry continued. "All my life with the Dursleys, they could only think of taking or keeping things away from me. They would make me do most of the household chores to make me pay for some real or imagined sins. Your family has done exactly the opposite – constantly offering to help me. Sir to answer your question, and I'll answer any question that you have, between the money that my parents left me, and the money that I received from Sirius' estate, I have about one and a quarter million galleons. I did receive more than that, but I had some legal obligations to clear up. I've always had some money from my parents, but until now I never really had access to it. Sir, I promise to dress properly when I come over to date Hermione in the future."

Hermione came to his aid. "Harry, I never cared what you wore at school. I just knew that it bothered you, that's all." She had come out of the kitchen, and was looking embarrassed for her friend."

Dan looked at Harry and his daughter realizing what "good friend" was coming to mean. "Harry, how can we help you?"

"Sir, you have a very lovely home. I was wondering if Mrs. Granger and Hermione could spend a day helping me shop for furniture and some household items. I don't have any experience with those things, and could use the help. I don't need to get a lot of stuff yet, since we'll only be there a few more weeks this summer, but I could really use some guidance."

Emma said, "Harry, we would be delighted to help."

Hermione said, "We can talk about it over dinner. Please sit down everyone."

Dinner consisted of spaghetti, French bread, a salad, water and a glass of wine for Dan and Emma. Harry and Hermione had cokes.

Harry smiled. "Hermione, this looks great. Sir, what is the wine?"

"It is a Cabernet. Did you want some?"

"No sir. I was just laughing to myself. I gave away an entire wine cellar this morning. Remus didn't want it, and we knew a retired Auror who deserved to have it."

Dan enjoyed wine and fancied himself something of a connoisseur of red wines. "Really. What was in it?"

"About two thousand bottles." Dan quietly moaned. "Remus and I decided to pretty much sell off the contents of the Black household. We are each keeping a few things, and leaving some things with the house. We made a list of people to give some things to. A few things will be donated to Hogwarts. Neither one of us wanted to live in a dusty museum. For the most part, we're selling the stuff to create a trust fund to help Voldemort's victims."

After dinner, the four of them went for a walk around the neighborhood. After a few minutes they reached the Black Dog Pub. Harry greeted Tim the barman, and they walked up the stairs to the second floor flat.

"Harry, this is huge," said Hermione quite surprised at the size.

"Remus said that it looks a little larger right now because it is empty and all of the windows. Let me show you around."

They looked around the place commenting on the nice view from the windows, the size of the different rooms and the well-made stone fireplace. The woodwork was crafted well and in exceptional condition. The number of windows along the long wall gave the large room a bright atmosphere. Harry thought that he would be very happy living there.

They talked about different furniture pieces that might work in the various spots. Emma took the time to explain some of the different style options to Harry, who had next to no personal experience with household furniture styles. Harry decided that he really would like a lighter oak finish, and would try to have that as a theme throughout the house. Hermione was beaming at her friend. She was so happy for Harry. They walked back to their house and called it a night.

Saturday morning, Harry awoke to the smell of coffee, pastries, waffles, and bacon. Mr. Granger seemed to be very at ease in the kitchen. "Good morning Harry. Emma and Hermione are out back talking with one of your escorts. If you wouldn't mind please tell them that breakfast is ready."

Harry went out, and invited them all in. Moody and the other guard refused, citing the need for "constant vigilance."

After breakfast, they brought plates out for the guards, told them that they were going shopping at Harrods, and would be gone for most of the day. They stopped to pick up Diane and arrived by the 10 AM opening time. They selected a number of pieces, each in a light oak finish. They selected two similar comfortable bedroom sets, dressers, nightstands, lamps, comforters, pillows, and several sets of soft cotton sheets.

For the family area, they selected a nice television, CD player, DVD player, and an entertainment center to put everything on. For furnishings, they selected an area rug, two futon sofas and two comfortable squashy chairs. Hermione found some plain oak bookcases. She suggested that he get six units that the sales person estimated would hold about 600 books. Harry wasn't sure that he'd be able to fill them up. Hermione seemed to have other ideas.

For the kitchen, Mrs. Granger suggested a rectangular oak butcher-block table. Harry decided on eight chairs. Hermione also talked Harry into getting a cellular telephone.

Emma gave the address, and they arranged for a Monday morning delivery. When it came time to total the bill, it came to 15,900 Pounds

Sterling. The sales clerk turned to Dr. Granger and asked, "How will you be paying your bill?"

Harry answered, "I'm your customer, and I'll be paying cash." He pulled two bundles of bills out of his old summer jacket pocket. Each bundle contained 100 crisp 100 pound notes. Harry counted 40 notes from the second bundle, and stuffed them back in his jeans pocket, and handed the rest to the salesperson.

"Harry," Diane whispered. "We need to talk. You can't go around doing that. How much cash did you bring?"

"50,000 Pounds," Harry answered. Diane just shook her head. "This was Sirius' quick get-away cash. Remus told me to use it to help furnish the flat." The clerk handed Harry his change, confirmed the delivery time, and thanked him.

Emma said, "Harry, I think that is enough shopping for the morning. Let's get a quick lunch." They had sandwiches in the store restaurant. After lunch they decided to split up for a while to save time. Diane and Emma offered to look at kitchenware. Hermione said that they wanted to shop for a watch.

Hermione insisted that Harry get himself a nice watch, telling him that the plastic five quid watches were for little kids, not famous wizards. In the men's jewelry department, Harry found his watch. It was a blue faced, stainless steel case Rolex "Submariner model." It was 5,000 Pounds! Harry hesitated and looked at Hermione. It was unquestionably a lot of money for a watch. "Go for it Harry. It will look great on you." Harry paid for the watch, and Hermione carried the bag.

Harry and Hermione both liked the patterns that Diane and Emma had picked out on the stoneware, glassware, mugs, and stainless flatware for sixteen. Harry paid the bill and made arrangements to have them delivered at the same time as the furniture.

When they all got back to the Granger house, Mr. Granger told Harry that Mundungus Fletcher had dropped off a rather large, wrapped package for him. Harry excused himself, went to the guest room, and opened the box. Inside were eight identical jewelry boxes, another

small box, two letters and a small wooden crate. Each of the jewelry boxes contained a pair of two carat diamond stud earrings. Harry read the note.

Dear Mr. Potter,

I had these set for you. Each box is the same, as the diamonds were all excellent quality between 1.9 and 2.25 carats. Any of the 4 remaining stones would be perfect for either a diamond pendant, or engagement ring should the occasion present itself. Keep them safe. Mr. Potter, I can't thank you enough for your generosity. Also please find a half case of absolutely exquisite brandy for you to give to Ms. Granger's father. The other note contains a tally of the property disposition per your instructions.

Harry, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I know that I let you down last summer and it almost cost you your life. All I can say is I'm sorry.

To your health,

Mundungus Fletcher

Harry put everything in the closet. He opened the other note.

Dear Mr. Potter and Mr. Lupin,

Per your wishes, I generally sold and disposed of the property according to your instructions. Moody's magical eye popped out when he saw the lorry full of wine bottles! He only had room for about half, and asked that you find another home for the remainder.

I delivered the collection of muggle weapons to Kingsley. It would be an understatement to say that he was absolutely delighted.

I sent the potions material and historical Black family tapestry to Hogwarts. Professors Snape and Binns were also delighted. The estimated value of the donation was 50,000 Galleons.

Mrs. Black's belongings and the jewelry that you asked me to sell were well received on the market. The total proceed was about 600,000 Galleons for the lot. The artwork was also easy to sell. The total from the sale was just over 750,000 Galleons. The china and silver service sold for 82,000 Galleons.

I did not do anything with the book collection. When you are ready, I will deliver the appropriate crates to Mr. Potter's residence and to the location designated by Ms. Granger.

Mr. Potter and Mr. Lupin, I can not thank you enough for the gift of the Black liquor supply. The 119 remaining bottles of 120 year old Napoleon Brandy will warm my heart for many an evening to come. I did send a bottle to each of the Order members and Hogwarts instructors in your name and also a half case for Ms. Granger's parents.

Please let me know how you would like the remainder of the wine distributed. Perhaps Ms. Granger's parents would consider taking a portion. You may change your mind and wish to keep the remainder yourself. The Galleons are all in a trust account in your name at Gringotts, except for the 100,000 that I already deposited to the Weasley vault pending your instruction regarding the final distribution.

At your service,

Mundungus Fletcher

Harry brought out the tally sheet from Mundungus and showed it to the Grangers and Diane. Diane spoke first. "Harry, you and Mr. Lupin seem to be trying to outdo each other in giving away the Black estate. I don't know Mr. Lupin but are you doing this because you don't need the money, don't want it, or because you mistakenly feel that you don't deserve it."

"Dr. Turnbull, not counting the property, the after tax value of the estate was about 17 million Pounds. Hermione says that I have a "saving people" thing. The fact is that I'm able to be here talking with you today because a lot of people have a "saving Harry" thing. Hestia

Jones and Bill Weasley are outside guarding the house standing in the rain

right now. I don't know Hestia very well, but a young French woman is sitting home alone waiting for Bill. It feels right to be able to give something back to the people that have risked their lives, their careers, or just given their time for me."

"Remus and I also wanted to use some of Sirius' money in an attempt to right people's lives after encounters from Voldemort or his thugs. A lot of the money in the trust fund will likely get used in the next two years. This war will create orphans, and broken families. I know about both, I don't want another kid to have to go to Hogwarts in cast off clothes, or not be able to go because they can't afford the tuition."

"Bottles of old brandy, fancy goblets, old artwork, or a ruby the size of a golf ball don't have any real value to me. Helping someone who needs a hand means everything." He paused for a few seconds. "Does that make sense?"

There were tears in the three women's eyes. They all nodded. Hermione put Harry in yet another bone crushing hug. "I love you," she whispered. "I love you too," Harry replied, a bit louder than he intended. Diane and Emma both smiled. Harry excused himself for a minute. He came back with the gifts for the Grangers, and Dr. Turnbull. Individually and collectively they were stunned with their gifts.

"They're beautiful."

"Wow."

"Oh, Harry."

"I didn't know such a thing existed."

"You didn't have to."

"I love them."

“Me too.”

“I hope 1876 was a good year.”

“Thank you,” they all said together.

It was about dinnertime, and Diane had to get home. Harry thanked Diane for her help and Diane thanked Harry for everything that he had done.

Saturday evening was the sort of evening that Harry had wished for his entire life. They popped popcorn, played cards, told stories, and listened to music. About nine Dr. and Dr. Granger excused themselves for the evening and Hermione and Harry found themselves alone in the family room. Hermione brought in two large mugs of cocoa to have with their popcorn, and quietly shut the door. “OK Potter. Give it to me. Now.”

Harry didn’t have a clue what she was asking for. “Hermione?”

“Now Potter.”

“Are we talking about the same thing?”

“Obviously not, Harry.” She looked him in the eye, and sat down on the carpet cross-legged facing him. She held his hand in hers. “I’m ready.”

“What?”

“You told me that there were to be no secrets between us. Right?”

“Right.”

“But you have a big one. You specifically said that you’ve got a huge secret to tell me. Right?”

Harry understood, somewhat relieved. “If you want, I’ll show you in my pensieve tomorrow, but here is the short version. After I got back from the Department of Mysteries, I had a little discussion with

Dumbledore. The prophecy was originally told to Dumbledore six months before I was born. Here goes.”

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... Born to those who have thrice defied him, Born as the seventh month dies...And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have powers that the Dark Lord knows not... And either must die at the hands of the other for neither can live while the other survives...The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies.”

“So far, three people have died over this thing. Besides Dumbledore, you and I are the only living people who know all of it. Voldemort learned of the first two lines of it sixteen years ago. That was the reason that my parents were killed.”

Hermione closed her eyes for a few seconds and sighed. “What did you do or say when Professor Dumbledore told you?”

“I yelled at him, swore, and smashed almost everything in his office! I really didn’t take it too well. I guess more than anything, I was pretty upset that he hadn’t told me about it earlier, or let me know that Voldemort might be looking for it. Maybe I would have been too young for all of the details, but... No buts. It’s done.”

“You really smashed his office?”

“Yup. I flipped over his desk, broke a table, and smashed those goofy silver things that he keeps on his desk. He let me run out of steam. Then he told me that he had too many possessions anyway, and that I could keep going if I felt like it. Then he apologized about a dozen times. That was it.”

Hermione put Harry’s hands around her waist. “Harry, look at me. I’ve told you before that I love you. Right?”

“Right.”

“This prophecy doesn’t change that. Right?”

“Right. Thanks. I thought that you would hate me. I either have to become a killer, or he will kill me. That’s not a little thing to gloss over. It has eaten at my insides every day and night since I’ve heard it. Hermione, I honestly don’t know what to do. Dumbledore gave me this big mission for my life, but he hasn’t given me a flipping clue how to do it. Director Bones at least gave me some hope, but I don’t know where to start.”

They sat looking at each other for a minute. She scooted over to sit on his legs.

“It’s late Hermione. Maybe we should get some sleep.”

“Could we just sit here for a while longer?”

Harry nodded, holding Hermione tightly. “Thanks for being my friend Hermione. You mean everything to me.”

“Thank you for being my friend Harry Potter. You mean everything to me.”

Down the hall they could hear, “It’s late you two. Get yourselves to your beds.”

“Yes Mum.”

“Goodnight Mrs. Granger.”

“Goodnight, kids.”

Harry gave Hermione a goodnight kiss. They hugged. Neither one wanted to be the first to let go.

In his room, Harry decided to write a quick letter before going to sleep.

Mr. Fletcher,

The diamond earrings were very well received. Hermione’s Dad seemed to really like the brandy bottles that you sent him. If it’s not

too much trouble, could you arrange to send over the rest of the wine too? I think he would appreciate it as well.

Thank you for your help.

Harry

Hedwig hooted a soft hoot as she took off.

The monsters left Harry alone that night.

Sunday morning at 9:30 the doorbell rang. It was Diane. "Hi Harry. I just dropped this jumper off for Emma."

"She said that they would be right back. Can you come in for a minute?"

"Sure."

"Coffee?"

"Thanks. So how are the monsters today? Did you sleep OK?"

"Better."

"Harry, let's see if we can get rid of one of them this morning. What do you see as the top monsters in your life? Before you name any, I hope you aren't going to have me feed any of them again." She smiled at him.

Voldemort

Anyone trying to hurt Hermione

Anyone trying to hurt the Grangers

Bellatrix

Dementors

People keeping secrets

“OK, let’s talk about them in order. Professor Dumbledore told me a bit about Voldemort when I was visiting you at Hogwarts. It’s doubtless that he qualifies as a monster. What can you do about him?”

“Improve my magical skills.”

“I can’t help you too much there.”

“Number two was anyone trying to hurt Hermione. What did you mean?”

“The Death Eaters have targeted her. They don’t believe that witches whose parents were not witches and wizards themselves deserve to live. They are deranged enough to practice their own version of genocide.”

“It could be the result of inbreeding. What can you do to save her?”

“As much as possible be with her, and help get her the skills to protect herself.”

“Good answer. She’s not helpless. Number three was anyone trying to hurt Emma and Dan. When did this make your list of fears?”

“This summer. Now that Voldemort’s out in the open, his thugs have started their attacks. Another friend on mine was attacked the night we got home from school. The Grangers have a public practice and they’re listed in the telephone book. If someone wanted to find them, they wouldn’t have to try too hard.”

“That makes sense. What would you have them do?”

“Take a year off and take a year long driving trip through the States.”

“Harry, that may be a good idea, but it’s not your decision to make. Have you talked with them? Do they know the risk?”

“I don’t think so. I really don’t know what Hermione has told them. I haven’t said anything yet.”

“Don’t forget about it. They’re good people. I don’t want to see them get hurt either. Number four is Bellatrix – what are your specific concerns with her?”

“Aside from the fact that she tortures people for fun, and killed Sirius, she bugs the crap out of me.”

“She probably talks trash to people to cause her opponents to lose focus while fighting with them. Or it could be that she is just a lunatic serial killer. How long has she been at this?”

“Most of her adult life. She was in wizard prison for fourteen years until Voldemort broke her out three months ago.”

“Number five is dementors – I don’t know what they are.”

“They are real monsters. They attack you by making you re-live your worst fears and then try to suck your soul out.”

“Gross! What can you do about them?”

“I have been trying to teach the other students a spell that drives them away. It’s really difficult to master. Most people can’t do it.”

“What makes a spell easier or harder?”

“The amount of mental discipline and concentration required to use it, I suppose.”

“I might be able to help you with that. How many people have you taught this to?”

“A bunch. Four are able to do it so far.”

“And your last monster is people keeping secrets from you. Why do they do that?”

“They think I’m too young.”

Diane nodded. “Harry, as I understand it, you have been developing mental discipline under adverse circumstances since you were one. You have more mental discipline and strength of character than 99 of the adults on the planet. You do have a higher level of pent up anger, which while deserved, isn’t doing you any good. I recommend that you rationally hold a discussion with the person or persons who you believe are keeping secrets from you. You need to explain that the risk of their keeping things from you outweighs the risk of you knowing the information.”

“Thanks. I think I understand what you are telling me. Diane, you said that I could ask you anything. Why are you so interested in helping me?”

“A lot of reasons. You mean a lot to Hermione and Emma, you’re a great teenager who deserves some help, and you are an interesting person.”

“Thanks. What do you mean?”

“Harry, most of the teens that I talk with are worried about their makeup, what part is or isn’t pierced, how they did in Dungeons and Dragons, or being pregnant. I don’t see any makeup, you have no obvious piercings, I haven’t heard you talk about silly games with dragons, and I have every reason to believe that you and Hermione behave responsibly. Neither you nor anything that you did caused your issues. Besides, I really love flying with you.”

“I understand. By the way, dragons are real.”

“Oh. I’ll remember that. Harry, last week, you passed on one of my questions. Do we know each other well enough to go back to it?”

“I suppose.”

“OK Harry, so how do you get from where you are to being a fulfilled, happy, adult wizard who lives happily ever after?”

“I have to keep Hermione safe, and kill Voldemort.”

“Why you Harry?”

“It’s my prophesized destiny. I’m supposed to kill him, or be killed by him.”

“You mean that you have a choice in this?”

“I hadn’t thought of it that way. I suppose that I do. Thanks.”

“Oh, hi Diane.” Emma was a bit surprised to see her friend up so early on a Sunday.

“Hi Grangers. Em, I dropped off your jumper, and I wanted to talk with Harry for a few minutes.”

“Who’s outside?”

It was Mundungus. “G’ morning, Mr. Potter. I have a delivery for Dr. Granger.” Outside were forty cases of rare and exceptional wines – Grand Cru Burgundy, Pomercol, Margaux, and Chateau Lefite – Rothchilds bottled in various years. “Where’d you like ‘em Guv?”

“I have some storage racks in the basement. Harry, these are fabulous.” The three men started carrying the cases from the driveway to the basement. After about seven trips there was a commotion outside.

Pop! “Harry!” It was Hestia. Pop, pop, pop, pop.

Harry looked out the window. There were five Death Eaters in the back garden. Kingsley and Hestia were laying in the yard. Three of the Death Eaters looked huge. The other two appeared to be women.

“Get out here mud blood,” a loud voice drawled.

Harry was quick to act. He handed Emma Director Bones' business card. "Mrs. Granger, call this number. Tell Bones that there are five Death Eaters in your back yard!"

The kitchen window shattered.

Harry stood up, pointed his wand at one of the Death Eaters, and yelled "Stupefy." A red light shot from his wand and hit one of the smaller Death Eaters. She went down. Harry ducked, as several jets of green light flew through to open window and over his head. Hermione crouched next to Harry, as another window shattered. "On three Harry, 1,2,3." They both stood up and fired. Unfortunately they had both aimed for and hit the same person, the other woman. She went down. Harry and Hermione scooted over to the other window and popped up. No one was in sight. They did not notice the old rat Pettigrew scurry away into the next yard.

Boom!!! The front door was blasted open. Two hulking figures lumbered through. Thunk, smash, "stupefy," "stupefy." The two lugs fell over. "That's how you throw a bottle Harry!" Emma was looking very pleased with herself.

Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. "Stupefy", "stupefy," "stupefy." The Aurors had arrived and downed the fifth Death Eater.

"Harry Potter, Hermione Granger are you in there?" It was Director Bones.

Harry and Hermione stood up. "We're here. We're OK."

"Tie up these goons. Harry, where are the others?"

"In here," Hermione shouted. "We have them."

The Aurors quickly tied up the still unconscious Death Eaters. Several more Aurors arrived. They attached anti-apparition manacles on the Death Eaters, and began unmasking them.

"Peter Goyle."

“Some kid.”

“Merlin, its Bellatrix Lestrangle! Stupefy.” The Auror hit her again, just for good measure.

They dragged out the two lugs from the house. Vincent Crabbe, and Gregory Goyle. The side of Crabbe’s face was bleeding badly.

Harry looked outside. He saw Lestrangle, Goyle Sr. and Draco Malfoy unconscious in the back garden.

While searching the Death Eaters and the back garden, the Aurors found a total of eleven wands and also found a length of rope with a hangman’s noose at the end.

“These are an interesting bunch that you have collected here Dr. Granger. I am Amelia Bones, from the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Thank you for your call. Can you tell us what happened?”

Emma related the story in detail, hearing Hestia shout a warning, and the vulgar call to come out. She described windows shattering, the green lights coming in the window, blasting holes in the walls and the actions by the kids. She explained how the front door smashed in, her and her friend Diane throwing the wine bottles, and how Harry brought down the other thug, finishing when the Aurors arrived.

“Dr. Granger do you have anything to add?”

He mentioned the bravery of the kids, and described seeing Mundungus being hit with a jet of green light and falling on the floor of the garage. Bones directed two of the Aurors to check it out.

“Miss. Granger, do you have anything to add?”

Hermione identified Draco as the Death Eater who had called her to come out of the house.

“Mr. Potter, I’m sorry to keep seeing you under official circumstances, but I’m delighted that you were not hurt. Are your recollections the same as the others?”

Harry affirmed that they were complete and accurate. One of the Aurors came back and talked with Director Bones in a whisper. When he was finished, Harry asked about Mundungus.

“Mr. Potter, Mr. Fletcher’s in a most unusual situation. It appeared that the curse missed him, instead hit the crate that he was carrying. Mr. Fletcher fell over, smashing a case of very old Cognac on the floor. He’s still unconscious, and smelling like a distillery. Since he’s in his element, we thought that we would leave him for a few more minutes. Perhaps some of that very expensive Cognac will at least soak in him.”

They both smiled at each other, and began laughing. Obviously Fletcher’s reputation as a scoundrel was deserved.

“Dr. Granger, if you would like to take everyone out for lunch, we’ll have your house cleaned up and fully repaired by the time that you arrive home.”

Diane suggested either the Black Dog or the Snooty Fox pubs. They decided to go to the Black Dog.

The food was excellent. Dan ordered half pints of Fosters for the women, and pints for himself and Harry. He explained, “a kid or a lady would always order a half pint at a time. Men order pints.”

The women were having their own discussion, leaving Dan and Harry to themselves.

“Harry, we live very different lives compared to you and Hermione. Emma and I have our practice. Thanks to you, we still have our daughter.”

“You and Hermione have your magic. Hopefully there is a lot more to it than blasting each other, and blowing up houses. But we have a lot of common ground. We both believe in right and wrong and try to

always do the best that we can. We both make mistakes, and if they're big enough, someone can get hurt. We're both pretty well grounded in terms of our beliefs, and of course we both share a love and respect for a very special young woman."

Harry nodded.

Dan continued, "I don't know you as well as I want to, but we can fix that, and maybe learn from each other."

"Thank you, Mr. Granger. I'd like that."

Dan smiled. "Me too. Thanks for lunch Harry," handing him the check. "Just kidding." They both laughed at each other.

Meanwhile, back at the Granger residence, the Department of Magical Reversals unit was finishing the repairs on the house. Amelia had gotten preliminary statements from the Auror team. They were getting ready to transport the captured Death Eaters. Tonks, Jones, and Dawlish were checking at anti-apparition manacles, when the features of Bellatrix began to change, the hair darkened, the facial features enlarged. Tonks yelled,

"Director Bones, come over here. I don't believe it."

End - Part 1

Part II – The Trial of Severus Snape

Severus Snape was captured during a raid on the Granger house. The proof against him is overwhelming, yet Dumbledore believes him not guilty. A split in opinion of the light side quickly occurs.

Sunday – July 21

Amelia Bones, Director of Magical Law Enforcement was having a great day. Less than an hour before she had received a frantic call from Dr. Emma Granger stating that the Granger residence was under attack from five Death Eaters. By the time the first team of Aurors had responded, four Death Eaters had already been subdued, with no deaths, no serious injuries, and property damage that was largely repairable. Her team of Aurors had stunned the last Death Eater, again without any casualties on her side.

The residents of the house, as well as the two of the three visitors to the house had been interviewed. Their descriptions of the events were lucid and consistent, usually a good indication of accuracy. The Grangers and their guests had been encouraged to leave the area for a few hours until their house could get set back in order. They had left before that pesky reporter from the daily prophet and her photographer Bozo had arrived. The photographer had taken several photos of the unmasked Death Eaters, and some of the physical evidence including a long rope with a hangman's noose at one end.

For the second time in four weeks the score in the battle between good and evil had favored the light side. A month ago at the Department of Mysteries ten Death Eaters had been captured with only one loss of life, a member of Dumbledore's (more or less secret) Order of the Phoenix, Sirius Black. While Harry Potter had been a central figure in that action, he appeared to be only an auxiliary figure in today's attack. Based upon the descriptions given by three of the five defenders, Hermione Granger had been the primary target. The Death Eaters apparently were ready to use her as the victim in a muggle born witch lynching.

The Department of Magical Reversals unit was finishing the repairs on the house. Amelia had gotten preliminary statements from the

Auror team. They were getting ready to transport the captured Death Eaters. Tonks, Jones, and Dawlish were checking the anti-apparition manacles, when the features of Bellatrix began to change. The hair darkened, the facial features enlarged. Tonks yelled, "Director Bones, come over here quick. I don't believe it."

It was Severus Snape!

Flash, Bozo took another photo. Rita Skeeter was beside herself. Deprived of the opportunity for any live coverage last month, she was at the right place, at the right time today. Severus Snape, ugly git greaseball who Dumbledore had defended fifteen years ago in a closed door session was caught with his hand in the cookie jar! Flash, Bozo took another for good measure. There had not been live photographs or coverage of a Death Eater capture in her career. She was going to run this one for all that it was worth. Three kids, a long suspected Death Eater, and Professor Severus Snape. She also had Bozo roll the Death Eaters over, face up, and take a picture of them unconscious with their white masks posed on their chests. Her career was back on the rise, even without resorting to the trash reporting that she had promised to avoid. Snape was rolled back onto his stomach, and Bozo took another photo of the five prisoners. Bozo also took one of Goyle Sr. with his sleeve rolled up revealing the dark mark.

Amelia Bones wanted to get going. She knew that she would need to make a statement to Skeeter. According to the rules of engagement that the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and the Daily Prophet had previously agreed to, there would be no mention of the intended victim's name or address. Nothing would be more specific than the home of a muggle born witch living in Crawley County being attacked. There would be no mention of the Granger's name, the fact that Hermione Granger was a student at Hogwarts, or that Harry Potter had personally put down several Death Eaters. The names of the suspects would not be published until the Prophet had received the go-ahead from Bones indicating that they had been/will be charged. The only picture that would be published immediately was a shot of the five taken with their backs to the camera with their Death Eater masks.

“At 10:00 this morning we received news that a probable Death Eater attack was under way in Crawley. Five apparent Death Eaters were captured and will be taken into custody for questioning. There were no deaths or injuries. I will have more information for you as we get it. Thank you.” Amelia concluded her statement. There would be no questions asked, or answered.

Bones would have a much different Sunday afternoon than she had envisioned when she first started the day. The prisoners were transported back to the holding cells at the Ministry of Magic. There they would be strip-searched and await interrogation in individual anti-apparition cells. Wizard law did not require a visit with a solicitor within a stated amount of time. Instead it was more along the lines of British muggle law, “at the queen’s pleasure” meaning that the prisoners could easily be held a week or longer without being charged. Only Minister Fudge or Wizengamot head Dumbledore could exert enough pressure to overrule her on this point. Amelia felt it highly unlikely that Fudge would interfere on any of the five given his own political problems. If anything, he would likely hail the capture as a successful indication of his ‘get tough on crime stance,’ at least as soon as it occurred to him that actually having a stance on an issue could be politically advantageous.

Amelia did not have the same opinion regarding Dumbledore’s likely reaction. Dumbledore had been a supporter of Snape for many years, having provided impassioned testimony in the last war that she believed saved Snape from fifteen years prison time. It would likely take a plea from Merlin himself to get Snape out of this mess. As such, she fully expected news of Snape’s capture to reach Dumbledore’s ears within the next twenty-four hours, and anticipated a visit no later than Tuesday morning.

She requested that each of the Aurors submit their written report by midnight that evening. She suspected, but did not know that Shackbolt may be a member of Dumbledore’s private organization. Under normal circumstances she did not mind, or have an opinion on the topic, but believed that there was a clear conflict of interest in this situation. Four of the five suspects/Death Eaters had current connections to Dumbledore. Three were current students, the other was a tenured professor. Amelia wasn’t certain, but thought it likely

that the three students were in Slytherin house, which Snape was head of.

Tonks was feeling crappy – crappy about the arrests, crappy about almost certainly losing out on two weeks of leave. What an unexpected set of perpetrators - three teenagers, the Order's spy, and an imbecile. She was certain that Potter's description of the green light jets being Avada Kedavra spells was accurate. Cor, the kid had seen the spell cast at him a dozen times more than she had! The blast marks on the kitchen walls were consistent with the spell. The eleven wands that were confiscated would all be tested, but it would be very difficult to identify whom some of the spare wands belonged to. They could probably get Ollivander's help for at least some of the wands. The others were probably smuggled in from the States. The teens were most likely using their registered school wands.

Bellatrix/Snape was already down by the time that Tonks and the other Aurors had arrived on the scene. Dawlish had searched Snape and had found two wands. Possession of the second wand by a civilian was worth a hefty fine. Both wands would be tested using the Priori Incantatem charm. If either wand had an unforgivable registered as the last spell, Snape's goose was cooked. Since he had been stunned, it was unlikely that he could have cleaned the wand by means of casting a non-violent spell.

Based on the physical evidence Tonks believed that Potter had hit Snape in the first returned volley. Malfoy was probably hit in the second returned volley. It looked like he had wet himself after the first spells were cast. The Aurors had stunned that imbecile Goyle Sr. He'd been stunned by the Aurors standing about fifteen feet away from Malfoy. The other two morons Crabbe and Goyle had been stunned and/or knocked unconscious from a thrown wine bottle while charging in the front door of the house. It was unclear who stunned Jones, or Shacklebolt. It was also unclear who had tried to murder Fletcher.

She wondered how long the three kids had been Death Eaters. It was somewhat likely that they'd taken the Dark Mark since school let out,

and this was probably their first mission. Why would Snape have been there disguised as Bellatrix?

Tonks was concerned about Hermione. She liked the girl, and was worried that the attack would darken her aspect. Sometimes surviving what was obviously intended to be a sick-minded attack was almost as bad as succumbing to it.

Hestia Jones was writing her notes to the case. She remembered seeing Shackbolt go down, and remembered calling out to Harry. The next thing she remembered was being revived by Tonks. She had been assigned the duty of searching the back yard. She logged finding a hangman's noose and seven wands.

Auror Nathan Dawlish was also writing his case notes. He'd been responsible for securing the front of the house. By the time that he'd gotten to the front door, 99 of the work had been done. The Potter boy had stunned one of the Death Eaters, and a muggle woman had hit the other Death Eater with an expensive wine bottle. The Death Eater had a fractured skull that likely would be the least of his problems in years to come. Dawlish laughed to himself - the kid may not have been much of a student, but his future was pretty well defined for him now. He had found and identified four wands. Two were lying loose on the floor of the living room, and two were in leg holsters. Each kid had been carrying one.

Auror Nick Straighthand was writing his case notes. His largest field contribution was re-stunning the Death Eater that he thought was Lestrage, getting the manacles on tightly, and transporting the unconscious prisoners into their cells. Not being a famous Auror, he did most of the grunt work. Stripping the Death Eaters in their individual holding cells was disgusting work. He'd had a hard time getting the black "Death Eater" gloves off a lot of the suspects, especially that Malfoy kid, who'd soaked himself. Each item was examined, inventoried, and put into bags. The cavity search was ugly. Why couldn't they ever go after people who practiced good hygiene? Greg Goyle's cut head had been cleaned and attended to. Someone else could look at him again tomorrow. He had collected the eleven tagged wands, put them in an evidence box, and hand carried them to Director Bones.

Jones was finishing her notes. Of the seven wands found in the back garden, four were spare class wands, all identical. The yanks would refer to them as Saturday night specials. The other three were well made, most likely Ollivanders. Two wands were on or close to the Malfoy kid. Most likely his own wand was in his leg holster, and a spare was found in his hand. Two wands were found in direct possession of Goyle Sr. To the left of Malfoy and Goyle they found Bellatrix/Snape. An Ollivander wand was in his leg holster. A spare was found a few feet away from him. Another was laying nine or ten feet away from where he fell. Snape probably had the extra wand so there would be virtually no chance that he would have to use his school wand. She speculated that Dumbledore might have the means of doing multiple spells testing on a wand to see farther back than the last spell, and Snape didn't want to get caught. Hestia was satisfied with her report. She signed it and made two extra copies. She sent the original off to Director Bones. It was standard procedure that each Auror complete their reports individually. Only later would they be compared for consistency.

Kingsley Shacklebolt completed his report, omitting the reason that he had been on the Granger property in the first place. He had not heard his assailant, and would not know that Hestia had seen the five Death Eaters apparate until they had their meeting on Monday afternoon. He'd been revived by Tonks, and had found Fletcher at about the same time as Strighthand. Kingsley had examined the kitchen, noting three spell blast marks on the wall by one of the broken windows. Each was approximately shoulder to head high.

Having each turned in their reports, they left for the day by 8PM. As Tonks had been in the better position than Shacklebolt or Jones, she agreed to talk to Dumbledore. She apparated to Grimmauld place to use the fireplace to call for Dumbledore.

No one was there when she arrived. She walked to the fireplace and called "Headmasters Office, Hogwarts, Canary Creams, Albus Dumbledore. Are you there?" After about a minute, Albus Dumbledore walked through the fireplace and helped Nymphadora back onto her feet?

“Good evening, my dear. How are you?”

“I am fine sir, thank you. Can we sit down for a few minutes? There was an attack today that you should know about.”

“Please tell me everything that you can.” It was understood that the active Aurors were not asked to divulge confidential information.

“There was a Death Eater attack late this morning at the Granger residence. It appears that all five Death Eaters had been captured. There were no serious injuries among the defenders. Dr. and Dr. Granger were there, Hermione, a friend of the dentists, Harry Potter, and Mundungus were there. Harry and Hermione had stunned three of the Death Eaters. One was knocked out with a thrown wine bottle. Dawlish and I stunned the last one.”

“I see. Please continue.”

“Sir, we were collecting evidence, and discussing our findings before transporting the prisoners. It turned out the Severus Snape had taken Polyjuice potion, and had posed as Bellatrix Lestrange. He was tied up and in anti-apparition manacles when he changed back. He was seen transforming by myself, Strighthand, Dawlish, Director Bones, Rita Skeeter, and photographed by her photographer, Bozo.”

“Who were the other Death Eaters?”

“Goyle Senior, Gregory Goyle, Vincent Crabbe, and Draco Malfoy. The Dark Mark was visible on each of their arms.”

“Did any of them see Severus?”

“No. They had all been stunned, and would not have been awakened until they had been placed in the individual holding cells, and strip-searched. There is no sightline from one cell into the next, and the cells themselves are soundproof.”

“Where are they now?”

“Sir, Director Bones would need to tell you that.”

“I understand. How was your department notified?”

“Dr. Emma Granger called Director Bones indicating that there was a probable Death Eater attack. Specifically, she said that there were five Death Eaters in the back yard.”

“What else can you tell me? Anything at all?”

“We don’t know who stunned Shackbolt or tried to kill Mundungus. Hestia believes that Shackbolt may have been down before she was hit. She saw five Death Eaters apparate in the back yard, one of which stunned her. Each of the Death Eaters had at least two wands. A total of eleven were confiscated and will be tested tomorrow.”

“Harry and Hermione’s preliminary statements were specific and remarkably consistent. Dr. Emma Granger and Dr. Turnbull’s statement regarding the attack from the other two Death Eaters were also specific and consistent. Dr. Dan Granger witnessed the attack on Mundungus. His description was consistent with an A-K spell. The evidence was consistent. Fletcher was carrying in a case of Cognac that Harry had given to the Grangers, and the spell hit the crate. Fletcher hit the floor, breaking a case of Cognac. I expect that he made a fair amount of noise going down. He was unconscious for several hours before being revived.”

“Vincent and Gregory were attacking the front door when they went down. Snape, Goyle Sr. and Malfoy were downed in the back yard. According to Potter:

Jones called out a warning

Someone called for the mudblood to come out

A kitchen window was shattered

Harry stood up and stunned one of the smaller Death Eaters

At about the same time three A-K spells were shot at Potter and missed

Another window was shattered

Harry and Hermione both stood up at the same time and stunned the other smaller Death Eater

Crabbe and Goyle Jr. crashed through the front door. Emma Granger and Diane Turnbull threw wine bottles. Emma's bottle hit Crabbe on the side of the head, cracking his skull.

Potter and Granger each stunned one of the kids (Goyle/Crabbe)

The Aurors arrived and stunned the fifth Death Eater

Bones called to Potter and Hermione

The yard was searched. A Hangman's rope and Mundungus were found.

After brief statements, the Grangers, Dr. Turnbull and Harry were asked to leave for a long lunch so the house could be more or less set right.

Tonks concluded, "I haven't seen Harry since, but believe that he is staying at the Grangers for the weekend. We were told to file our reports before leaving. That's all that I can think of sir."

"Your report was very complete and I'm certain will be of much help. Tell me Tonks, are there any pieces of this puzzle that seem a bit strange or out of place to you, anything at all, no matter how small?"

"Let me think about it sir."

"Good night Tonks. You did well today, and I'm very glad that you were not hurt. Please go home and get some well-deserved rest."

She smiled at him. Dumbledore was a very good leader. He always took the time to remember people, and thank them for their work. Dumbledore returned back to the castle. He had a lot to think about that night.

About the time that the Aurors were filling out their reports, Peter Pettigrew was getting ready to deliver his. He told the Dark Lord of a plan that had started off flawlessly then completely fell apart. Wormtail had stunned Fletcher, and the Auror Shacklebolt. One of the Death Eaters had stunned another Auror immediately on arriving.

The plan fell apart for several reasons. That aristocratic arse Malfoy had insisted on calling for Granger to come out of the house, effectively warning them, and there was a second wizard in the house who had stunned Bellatrix in the first volley. Malfoy had clearly not planned on there being so many wizards there. His plan fell apart with the first returned spell. Bellatrix had the portkey to return with. Her getting stunned effectively doomed the mission. Wormtail had disabled the guardians (more or less) and left at the time the Aurors had arrived, exactly as he had been instructed to. It was the second of three raids in two months that had completely collapsed due to an underestimation of the size of the opposing force. It was the second of two raids where they faced Harry Potter.

Voldemort's red eyes flashed menacingly. "Wormtail, what do you mean Bella was stunned? I saw her in her room a few hours ago. Do not lie to me Wormtail. Crucio." After a few seconds, Voldemort let up. "Go get Bella from her room."

Bellatrix appeared a minute later. "Master, I must have been sleeping all day. I was supposed to take Draco, Goyle and two of the new recruits on a warm up outing to torch the mudblood Granger's house this morning."

"Crucio. Bella you have failed me again. Why were you sleeping? Who went in your place? Wormtail told me that five Death Eaters arrived as planned, and bungled up the mission. They most likely were all captured, or killed, since no one has returned."

"Who was so eager to kill the Granger girl that they would spell you asleep and go in your place? Let us wait and see how this plays out. Wormtail, go find tomorrow's edition of the Prophet." Voldemort walked away.

As Wormtail left the manor he thought to himself, 'effing psycho.'

Dumbledore had slept poorly last night. Yesterday has been disappointing to him from many dimensions. While he had fully expected that Crabbe and Goyle would blindly follow their fathers' footsteps, he had hoped that Draco would exercise better judgement. Unfortunately Lucius' lifestyle had worked for him so well and so long that it would be easy for Draco to be seduced by his success. For most aspiring Death Eaters the rich and powerful Malfoy lifestyle was the dream. For most of them the reality turned out a bit different than the dream. Being a Death Eater typically resulted in one of two outcomes - becoming a killer and learning to live with it, or becoming a killer and dying because of it. Neither ending bore much resemblance to the promise of "power and prestige." For better or worse the three boys would likely spend ten - fifteen years in Azkaban. In the unlikely event that they actually survived, they would be nothing more than wasted human beings, no magic remaining, no family, and no prospects. He doubted that any of them possessed sufficient strength of will to survive five months.

Dumbledore was puzzled over Severus' actions. He had mentioned that Voldemort was actively recruiting, but had not mentioned any of the boys specifically. He had not mentioned being called to go in a raid. Why would he have disguised himself as Bellatrix? Had he been asked to substitute at the last minute? If so, why go as LeStrange? If the raid had been sanctioned, why not simply go as Snape, unless he was worried about being seen by any of the defenders?

There had to have been one or two others involved. Kingsley and Fletcher had been quietly stunned. The men had good hearing and reflexes, so most likely they would have heard an apparition pop unless the Death Eater(s) doing the apparition was a master.

The raid at the end of June must have been crippling to Voldemort's Death Eater bench strength. Lucius doubtless had been financing much of Tom's activities, much the same as Devlin Whitehorn, the Nimbus broomstick designer was heavily contributing to the Order. The LeStranges along with Dolohov and Nott were the Death Eaters

most able to go out and execute a planned raid. Rookwood, Avery, and McNair were also capable soldiers, but were not leaders. Jugson and Crabbe were little more than followers, muscle on demand, and easily replaced.

They never did find who was responsible for the raid at the home of Susan Bones and her parents on 3 July. It was fought to a standoff until the Aurors arrived. The Death Eaters had left upon seeing them. It was probably another training mission.

Harry had reported seeing 25 – 30 Death Eaters during Tom's ascension 14 months ago. Dumbledore mentally ticked through the list as he knew it.

Killed or captured:

Eleven (not counting the kids from this week)

Known to be active:

Bellatrix

Pettigrew

Travers

Rosier's son

Rookwood's nephew

May be active:

Severus Snape

Narcissa Malfoy

Mrs. Goyle

Mrs. Crabbe

Igor Karkarov

Lindon Bagman

Thomas Borgin

Rachel Borgin

Candidates for recruitment:

Pansy Parkinson

Delores Umbridge

Carl Warrington

Willie Widdershans

Marcus Flint

Millicent Bultstrode

Roger Derrick

The numbers didn't seem to add up. Who were the others? Those mysteries would have to wait for another day. In the short term he needed to develop and execute a plan to keep Severus' name out of print. If his name were to be published, it would become much more difficult to win his release. At a minimum, his teaching career would be finished, even out of the country. Any school with the possible exception of Durmstrang would disqualify him over the arrest as part of its hiring process due diligence.

The Prophet would not publish a name or print the face of a suspect until they have been charged, unless there had been a previous conviction. Thus of the five prisoners, only Tom Goyle could possibly be mentioned in the morning edition. Dumbledore would find out in about an hour. If as he suspected, Snape was not mentioned by name, Albus would contact Amelia late in the morning, after the interrogations and wand testing.

Minerva joined Albus for breakfast. She sat down, took one look at him and asked, "What's bothering you Albus?"

"Severus, three students and a known Death Eater were arrested yesterday attacking the Grangers at their home. No one was killed, or seriously hurt, but there are a lot of details to sort out."

"What was Servrus' role?"

"I'm not certain yet. I believe that there may be sufficient evidence and testimony for the Wizengamot to convict most or all of them."

"Albus, I'm going to ask you a question that you don't want to hear. You've said for sixteen years that you trust Severus. How can you be so sure? His actions over the years have put him so close to walking a fence line. How do you really know where his heart is? You must believe that he has participated in raids on muggles or muggleborns in the past. Some of his stories are as weak as the American President's story that he never inhaled. If Severus were ever caught by either side, it came with the understanding that there would be a consequence. You cannot have a published Death Eater on staff. The outcry would make what you faced with Lupin's condition seem like a church picnic. Your position here isn't that strong right now. You may need to look at this situation in the light of being a greater good case, and accept a sacrifice."

Dumbledore sat in silence, waiting for his friend of nearly sixty years to finish.

"Who else knows the specifics of the attack?"

The three Grangers, Dr. Turnbull, Harry, seven Aurors, Amelia, Rita Skeeter, and her photographer. However, they may not all have seen Severus."

"Albus, fifteen people won't keep a secret, especially if fully half of them are disinclined to."

An owl fluttered to their table. They looked at the paper together.

Death Eater Attack Foiled

By Rita Skeeter

Five Death Eaters were captured red-handed yesterday during a raid on a Witch's home in West Sussex county. When Ministry Aurors arrived on the scene, several of the Death Eaters had already been stunned. The Auror Response Team led by Auror Nymphadora Tonks snared the rest. Amelia Bones, Director on the Magical Law Enforcement Division had this comment. "At 10:00 this morning we received news that a probable Death Eater attack was under way in Crawley. Five apparent Death Eaters were captured and will be taken into custody for questioning. There were no deaths or serious injuries. I will have more information for you as we get it."

This reporter was on the scene and noted that three of the Death Eaters appeared to be younger than the other two. Fully in co-operation with the Ministry, we are able to release this photo at this time.

Minerva looked at the photo of the five Death Eaters lying face down on the ground, handcuffed with their hands behind their back. "Let me guess, Snape, Goyle, Crabbe, Malfoy, and Goyle's father Tom."

"You are of course correct, Minerva. However we were shown as much kindness from Ms. Skeeter as we could hope for. More actually. She certainly could have let more information slip by inference if she had chosen to.

"Albus, I recommend making plans to replace a second professor for September. The board of governors will almost certainly hear of this, and they will never allow him to return."

"Let us see how the day turns out, before we put out a position available notice. I will see you later."

Meanwhile Amelia was preparing her list of questions to ask each of the prisoners.

What is your name?

When did you become a Death Eater? – Had the kids taken the Mark in school?

What was your mission yesterday? – She wondered how much they had been told.

Who else came with you yesterday? – Would anyone name Snape?

What spells did you cast? – This could confirm the wand ownership.

Who sent you to the Grangers? – This should identify who led the mission

How did you get there? – Apparition or portkey?

Where were you to go after the mission? – Would anyone name Voldemort's address?

Who selected the Grangers as targets? – Was this a school grudge, or something deeper?

Thomas Goyle was the first to be questioned under Veritaserum. Kingsley was doing the actual questioning.

What is your name? "Thomas Goyle."

When did you become a Death Eater? "1976."

What was your mission yesterday? "To kill the Grangers, burn their home, and lynch the witch."

Who else came with you yesterday? "Vincent, Gregory, Draco, and Mrs. Lestrage."

What spells did you cast? "Avada Kedavra."

Who sent you to the Grangers? "Draco selected the target. Mrs. Lestrangle approved the operation."

How did you get there? "Portkey."

Where were you to go after the mission? "To report back to the Dark Lord."

Who selected the Grangers as targets? "Draco selected the Grangers."

Amelia wondered if Voldemort had give Goyle his 20-year Death Eater pin.

Vincent Crabbe was next.

What is your name? "Vincent Crabbe."

When did you become a Death Eater? "Two weeks ago."

What was your mission yesterday? "To burn their house, and kill the people inside."

Who else came with you yesterday? "Greg's Dad, Greg, Draco, and Mrs. Lestrangle."

What spells did you cast? "I didn't cast any spells."

Who sent you to the Grangers? "Mrs. Lestrangle took us there."

How did you get there? "Portkey."

Where were you to go after the mission? "Back to report to the Dark Lord."

Who selected the Grangers as targets? "Draco."

Amelia wondered if this kid even had the brains to cast a spell.

Greg Goyle was next.

What is your name? "Greg Goyle."

When did you become a Death Eater? "Two weeks ago."

What was your mission yesterday? "To kill the people, lynch Hermione, and burn the house."

Who else came with you yesterday? "Vince, Dad, Draco and Mrs. Lestrangle."

What spells did you cast? "None."

Who sent you to the Grangers? "Mrs. Lestrangle took us there."

How did you get there? "Portkey."

Where were you to go after the mission? "Back to the Dark Lord."

Who selected the Grangers as targets? "Draco."

Amelia knew that Greg had obviously inherited his father's intelligence.

Draco Malfoy was next.

What is your name? "Draco Malfoy."

When did you become a Death Eater? "Eight months ago."

What was your mission yesterday? "To kill the mudblood Granger, her parents, and anyone else that we found there. When we were done, we were to hang the mudblood from a tree in their back garden. I was going to have her gang-raped as well."

Who else came with you yesterday? "Bellatrix, Greg, Vince, and Vince's Father."

What spells did you cast? "Avada Kedavra and Reducto."

Who sent you to the Grangers? "Bellatrix was leading the mission. I co-planned the mission."

How did you get there? Portkey. "Greg and Vince never learned to apparate."

Where were you to go after the mission? "Back to tell the Dark Lord of our success."

Who selected the Grangers as targets? "I did. She deserved it."

It sickened Amelia to believe that anyone could harbor so much hatred. She hoped that Draco would enjoy his time with the dementors.

Finally it was Snape's turn. Kingsley gave him the Veritaserum and waited a few minutes for it to take effect.

What is your name? "Severus Snape."

When did you become a Death Eater? "1979."

What was your mission yesterday? "To accompany Vincent, Greg, Draco and Thomas on a mission. I substituted myself for Bellatrix. I was trying to keep anyone from getting killed."

Who else came with you yesterday? "Vincent, Greg, Draco and Thomas."

What spells did you cast? "Reducto."

Who sent you to the Grangers? "I sent myself."

How did you get there? "I made a portkey. We all used it."

Where were you to go after the mission? "Back to Riddle Mansion."

Who selected the Grangers as targets? "Draco did."

Amelia handed Kingsley another list of questions.

How did you substitute yourself for Lestrage? "I slipped her a sleeping draft, and used Polyjuice potion to disguise myself as Bellatrix."

Does she know it was you who took her place? "I don't think so."

Why did you substitute yourself? "Bellatrix would have either killed everyone there, or gotten everyone killed trying. Years ago I had made a Wizard's pledge to Narcissa Malfoy to do what I could to keep Draco from getting killed."

Who cast Avada Kedavra at Harry Potter? Draco and Thomas...I'm not sure. I was just getting stunned by Potter.

Can you overcome the effects of Veritaserum? "Yes."

Is there a truth serum that you cannot overcome? "No."

"Thank you. Guard, we are ready to go."

It was nearly lunchtime.

On Monday morning, Hermione handed Harry the Daily Prophet. "Harry look at today's paper."

They looked at the article together and the photo together. Harry spoke first. "Goyle, Crabbe, Goyle, Malfoy and Goyle. Wait. Who is on the end? That isn't Bellatrix."

"That looks like a man with long black hair. Harry, is that Professor Snape?"

"Yup, I'd bet that it is. I can think of only one way that he got there. We left about 45 minutes after the attack, which was over within five minutes. If he'd taken Polyjuice, it would have worn off minutes after

we left. The paper doesn't mention anyone escaping, and I'd stunned her first."

"Right. Oh Harry this is awful. If he did try to kill you, what else has he done? If he didn't, he will have a horrible time convincing anyone. This will split the Order like a wedge. What time is Remus coming?"

"8:00. That's twenty minutes from now. Let's get breakfast ready."

"We'll help. Did I understand that one of the attackers from yesterday was disguised in something other than those ridiculous masks?"

"We believe that it was Professor Snape. I'll cook the sausages. Hermione can you make the coffee? Dr. Granger, could you get the toast and jam? Dr. Granger could you get the juice?"

Harry, please call us by your choice of Mum, and Dad, Dan and Emma, or Mr. And Mrs. Granger. Doctor is too confusing."

"OK sir."

"Harry..."

"I'll work on it, Mr. Granger."

The doorbell rang. "I'll get it," said Hermione.

"Good Morning, Professor Dumbledore."

"Good morning, Miss Granger. May I come in?"

"Of course. Can we get you coffee or breakfast? Please sit down."

"Coffee please. Good morning Doctor, Doctor, Harry."

"Professor."

"Harry, I know that you have a busy day planned. If you take me to your property, I will cast a set of comprehensive protection wards for you."

"Yes sir. I am expecting Remus any minute. Can he join us?"

"Of course. Ah, here he is now. Afterwards I would like to hear about the events from yesterday."

Emma interrupted. There was no trace of her usual smile. "Professor, we would like to be in on that discussion too. I am curious to understand how three of your students and one of your professors came to the conclusion that murdering our daughter and probably the rest of us would make for good sport."

"Yes we should all talk about that. It may prove to be a lengthy discussion. Perhaps we could meet this evening at seven. Would that be convenient for each of you?"

"Yes. We look forward to hearing from you," said Emma

"I'll drive," said Remus. "It isn't far."

"Professor," asked Hermione, "How does warding work?"

"A good question Hermione. A ward is a spell that prevents an action from taking place at a location for a given length of time. For instance you can set a ward up at a location so prevent apparition, or to prevent a wizard or a muggle from seeing an object. If you recall at the world cup Quidditch finals, the stadium was warded with anti-muggle spells."

"Harry, in your case, since the area lower area of your building has a muggle pub, it may be best to ward the upper area from wizard eyes. It would work on a secret keeper basis, much like Grimmauld place. You would have to share the secret with any witch or wizard that you wanted to invite into your home. Anyone else would see a one-story building. Since you will only be here a few more weeks this summer, I recommend that any fireplaces not be hooked up to the floo network. I realize that would make visiting your friend Mr. Weasley more inconvenient, but you would be much safer. I also recommend warding the living space itself against apparition, or disappearance. The decision is of course, yours."

“Thank you professor. How long will the wards that you set up today last?”

“Harry, they will last at least a year. During the school year, I will teach you warding techniques so that you can protect your home yourself. Miss Granger, I will of course show you too.”

“Thank you Professor,” they both said.

They unlocked the lower door and walked up the stairs. Harry unlocked the upper door, and they all walked in. Dumbledore tented his hands under his nose, closed his eyes for half of a minute, held his arms out to each side and turned around twice. The space glowed blue for just a few seconds, then the light disappeared. Dumbledore handed Harry a piece of parchment and asked Harry to write, Harry Potter’s place is located above the Black Dog pub, on the parchment. He then asked Harry to show the people that he wanted to know where he lived the parchment, and to keep the parchment safe in his wallet. As soon as they walked out of the building this morning, Harry would be the only wizard to know the location, or be able to see the door leading up to his space.

“Now, Harry, Remus, and Hermione, I must take my leave. I shall see you at your parents’ house this evening at 7:00.” He walked down the stairway, and out the door, and disappeared.

Back at the Office of Magical Law Enforcement, when Amelia got back to her office after the interrogations, Dumbledore was waiting outside her door. “Dumbledore, I was expecting you. Please come in.”

“Thank you Amelia. How is the investigation proceeding?”

“Quickly. The Veritaserum depositions were quite consistent. It appears that the graduating class of 1998 will be short several students.”

Dumbledore ignored the remark. "Have the wands been tested?"

"Dawlish is coming here in a few minutes. Would you care to act as witness?"

Dumbledore nodded slightly. Dawlish walked in, and whispered a few words to Bones, and said "We are ready to begin."

Wand 1 marked property of Severus Snape - Reducto

Wand 2 marked property of Severus Snape - Portus

Wand 3 marked property of Severus Snape – Avada Kedavra

Wand 4 marked property of Vincent Crabbe - Scourgify

Wand 5 marked property of Vincent Crabbe - Cruciatus

Wand 6 marked property of Thomas Crabbe – Avada Kedavra

Wand 7 marked property of Thomas Crabbe - Silencio

Wand 8 marked property of Draco Malfoy - Reducto

Wand 9 marked property of Draco Malfoy - Avada Kedavra

Wand 10 marked property of Greg Goyle - Cruciatus

Wand 11 marked property of Greg Goyle - Cruciatus

"Thank you Auror Dawlish. Please file your report."

"Yes Director Bones. Good Day Professor." He left and closed the door.

"Well Albus, Your potions professor has got himself a rather sticky wicket. Potter and the Grangers are going to testify that three killing curses were fired at more or less the same time. Everyone believes that there were three Death Eaters in the back garden. All of the

physical evidence is against him. Unless you come up with another confessing Death Eater that no one saw, I see no hope for him.”

”Albus, I have heard the rumors in the past that Snape was acting in the role of Spy for your Order. Let’s assume that much is true. Please don’t say anything yet. Let’s assume that everything in his deposition is true. The other Death Eaters we have don’t know that Snape was there. Voldemort must know that his raid was scuttled – they all said that Bellatrix was to lead it and that it was a sanctioned raid. All Voldemort would have to do would be to have a roll call and see who was missing. If Snape went back, he would be dead.”

She continued, “Please consider that Skeeter and Bozo know that Snape was there. Who knows who they told. The Grangers and the other victims are not peasants that can be bullied. They’re all well educated muggle doctors. They’re bound to go through the muggle court system if we let Snape off. Potter and Hermione would side with her parents in a blink. Severus Snape is screwed, pure and simple.”

“To get him back as your spy, you would need to;

Convince Potter and the Grangers that there was another unseen person in the back garden.

Find the person who fired the third spell, and tossed their wand at Snape.

Convince Potter and the Grangers that Snape was there acting in their best interest.

Tamper with a mountain of evidence.

Find out who Skeeter and bozo told.

Destroy all of the photographs.

Obliviate them and everyone that they told.

Invent some story for Snape to tell Voldemort that wouldn’t get him killed.

Which still leaves you with the rather large problem that if someone believed that Snape was there, the published photograph would do nothing to dissuade their opinion.”

“To keep Snape out of Azkaban you would need to do at least the first 3, which would still leave him with steep fines for possessing a second wand and Death Eater paraphernalia.”

“To keep him out of muggle prison, you’d need to oblivate the entire Granger household. Is that what you really want to do? Albus, I’ll sit on this case for 24 hours. You need to be back here with your plan by 9 AM on Tuesday. I do intend to charge the other four later this afternoon.”

She concluded. “Albus, what makes you want to believe him so badly? By department reputation, he is a master oculmens. By his own admission, he has learned to overcome veritaserum. His actions place him in a sort of no mans land – not really on our side, not really on Voldemort’s. Let’s say that he has told you a hundred things in his role of spy. How many turned out to be timely, critical pieces of information? How much information did he have to give Voldemort in return? I recognize that I have a bias against using spies and double agents. Albus, in this case, I flat out do not trust your man. Read their depositions if you would like and leave them on the table behind you before you leave. Cheers.”

After reading the depositions, Dumbledore left Director Bones office and went to the holding cells to talk with Snape and Malfoy. Perhaps one of them would have additional information. As it stood, Amelia was right, Severus was like a man flailing his arms in icy water, with few prospects for rescue in sight.

“Hello Severus. Have some tea. Are you OK?”

“Fine Headmaster. Thank you. I apologize to you personally for my actions. If you have a quill and parchment, I’d like to offer my resignation as Potions Master from Hogwarts.”

“As you wish Severus, but that may not be necessary. I will hold it for you for a few days if you would like. Please tell me why you assumed Bellatrix’s form.”

“Draco’s grand plan was to capture the Granger girl, gang rape her in front of her parents, lynch her, burn their home and leave her parents mortally wounded to die slowly. Years ago, I made a Wizard’s pledge to Narcissa, that I would do what I could to keep Draco alive. I recently found out that Draco had taken the mark during the last winter holidays. Draco had obtained the Dark Lord’s approval for the raid. If Potter’s guard hadn’t been there and called a warning, there is every reason to believe that everyone in the house would have been killed. It was Draco’s miscalculation that Potter was in the house, and Jones was there. Unfortunately, Potter stunned me first with a lucky shot, and somehow they managed to hold the rest off until the Aurors arrived to save them. As such, I wasn’t able to stun Draco, and the others, and then get away. It was my idea to have him arrested for a comparatively minor offense. Obviously I failed to execute my plan. Again I apologize.”

“Severus, there were three killing curses fired at Harry, and one at Mundungus. Draco, and Thomas did the first two. Who cast the third curse?”

“I don’t know sir.”

“Who stunned Kingsley?”

“I don’t know Headmaster. I didn’t know that he was there too. We didn’t stun him. I stunned Hestia to keep Draco from killing her. Bellatrix may have planned for an advance man to be there. Does Kingsley remember anything? Was anyone badly hurt, or killed?”

“If Kingsley saw anything, he didn’t say. I haven’t talked with him yet. Tonks informed me of the attack late Sunday evening. Mundungus was there as well, but suffered no lasting injury. Was Peter at the Riddle house when you left?”

“I didn’t see him. Bellatrix may have assigned him as the advance man for the raid.”

“Severus, what would you have me do?”

“Please accept my resignations Headmaster. I will not survive a week in Azkaban if they believe that I’m your spy. Without Peter or a witness that may have seen him, I’ll certainly be convicted of casting the third curse. What defense would you have me use -Being under the affects of an Imperious curse? Potter knows that the three curses were fired simultaneously, and without evidence or a confession, you will never convince him or the others that there was someone else in the back garden.”

“I will ask to see his pensive memory, as well as Kingsley’s and Hestia’s. One last question – Do you have any theories as to who may have attacked Mundungus?”

Snape asked, “Where was he found?”

“In the Granger’s garage.”

“A single person could have attacked Fletcher and Shacklebolt if they were fairly quiet. It certainly could have been Pettigrew. It seems odd that he tried to kill the one, and only stunned the other.”

“I agree. I will ask Amelia to question both of them, and examine their memories. Do not lose faith my friend. I will not accept your resignations, rather hold them for a week.”

“Thank you Headmaster. I do appreciate your help. Please remember that I did recognize the risk of my actions if caught, regardless of my intentions. Do not allow the Order or the others to become splintered over my fate.”

“I’ll do what I can Severus. I will not abandon you. I’ll inform the Order tomorrow, and I’ll visit you again on Wednesday.”

“Thank you Headmaster.”

Next, Dumbledore went to talk with Draco Malfoy. His opinion was that Draco carried a lot of pride, and kept a lot of anger bottled up

inside. He believed Draco to be of at least average intelligence, but lacking in strength of will, and considered himself to be a young Don Juan. Draco had never had to work for anything, instead relied on people's fear of his father, or his money. The entire firefight couldn't have lasted thirty seconds, and Draco had wet himself. Perhaps he could be bullied into giving up some useful information.

"Good morning, Draco."

Draco sat up. His normally slicked back hair was unwashed. Being in wizarding jail, even 24 hours seemingly had not agreed with young Mr. Malfoy. A lot of his confidence seemed to have evaporated.

"Professor Dumbledore. What brings you here?"

"I am here in my capacity as Head of the Wizengamot, an organization that, unfortunately will not take kindly to your recent actions. I am here to ask you some questions. Shall we do this with, or without Veritaserum?"

"It is your choice Professor. I will not lie to you." Some of the bored drawl seemed to have vanished from his voice.

"OK. I will choose to believe you until you give me reason not to. Why Draco? Why did you choose to become a Death Eater?"

"Professor, It was my destiny. The Dark Lord will help us to purify the Wizarding world. It's not a position that a mudblood lover like you would agree with, but many others believe it to be necessary."

"You are aware that Tom Riddle's father was a muggle businessman. Not a squib, but simply a muggle. Wouldn't his heritage create something of an inconsistency in your way of thinking? Draco, Tom is as deranged a man as I have ever known. I am disappointed that you have chosen to follow him. Do you remember the school closing ceremony from the end of your fourth year? My message was about choosing what was right rather than what was easy. That closing message was directed largely at you."

“Professor, you didn’t come here to talk politics, or to win hearts and minds. What do you want?”

“Draco, I want you to tell me who helped you train for your mission against the Grangers?”

“Mostly I worked with Bellatrix. Occasionally I talked about it with Peter and Delores. The Dark Lord repeatedly asked if the house was guarded. Bellatrix and I had come by one time two weeks ago at lunch time to check. The mudblood and her mother were home alone.”

“What other missions are being planned?”

“I won’t tell you.”

“Fifteen years is a long time to spend in Hell Draco. I don’t believe that you will survive six months. There is some sentencing discretion in cases where no one was seriously injured. Besides, I can use Veritaserum, and ask you at my leisure. You had many rights and privileges as an up-and-coming Hogwarts student that you do not possess as a prisoner.”

“It won’t be long before the Dark Lord wins. Besides you, there are no serious threats against the Dark Lord. Fudge doesn’t have the stones to go to war.”

“You may be right, but for now, I am sitting on this side of the bars, and you on that side. I’m going to have dinner with the company of two young ladies tonight. What are your plans? I will come back one last time Wednesday for your answer. Enjoy your day Mr. Malfoy. I’ll have your OWL results sent to your new address.”

Earlier that day Harry, Hermione, and Remus were waiting in the pub for the Harrods deliverymen to deliver his furniture and kitchen wear. Remus was very happy for his young friend. “After they drop your furnishings off, what else will you need?”

“We need some groceries, sodas, and butterbeer. I’d like to get some CDs, DVDs, a few gifts for the school year. I’d like to buy Hermione

something special. We will need to get our school stuff as soon as the OWLs arrive. You and I should go shopping for some robes, and I would like to get Hermione a very special set of dress robes in case there is a school dance this fall. Are there owl-order catalogs we can use, or should we spend the next few weeks shopping?”

Hermione giggled quietly to herself. She really liked having Harry live so close to her parents’ home. She had never had a summer boyfriend before, and was really enjoying it.

Talking quietly, they began to tell him the details of Sunday morning. Remus was not surprised that Vince, Greg, and Draco had chosen the path that they had. “I believe that they had chosen their side in life by the time that I had met them three years ago. I think the best that we can do is to provide them a fair education until they abuse their privilege. Perhaps Dumbledore could have mentioned his concerns to the ministry, but very few people wanted to hear that a rich man’s son was going wrong. Fudge was so indebted to Malfoy that he would have had a deaf ear. It was the same when we were in school, but with Barty Crouch Jr.”

“What about the others, Zabinni, and Parkinson? They are kids who’re on the fence – their parent’s aren’t Death Eaters.

“I don’t know Harry. It is different trying to teach facts or skills, from beliefs and values. You and Hermione have outstanding values. Surely you don’t credit Binns or Tralawny?”

The Harrods truck pulled up. Harry went out to meet the drivers. “Hiya sunny. Is your mother home?”

“No sir, she is not available. I purchased those things. I live in the upper floor. Please leave everything in the big open space. I’ll be waiting down here when you need me to sign the delivery receipt.”

“OK Guv. No offense meant.” The deliveryman probably didn’t have very many not quite sixteen year old customers.

Harry thanked them when they had finished, and the three went up to decide where to put everything. Moving the bedroom furniture into

each of the bedrooms made the pile a little smaller. Hermione giggled as Harry and Remus levitated the sofas and chairs from one spot to another, allowing her to decide where everything looked best. Harry really was glad that Director Bones had given him his magic license. Remembering lessons from little professor Flitwick, Harry exercised a perfect “swish and flick” with his wand.

The glassware, dishes and flatware took a while to put away. Harry vanished the packing material, and soon enough, they were working on hooking up the television, DVD player, and the CD player. The three of them were quite proud of themselves when they turned on the television, and the beeb appeared on the screen. Remus joked that they should exercise extra care in the event that Arthur Weasley came by. “He would have half of the flat taken apart investigating how everything worked.”

Dumbledore left the holding cells and met up with Harry back at his home to see if there were any details in his memory that could clarify things. He was quite surprised how quickly Draco had implicated Delores Umbridge, and believed that he could prove to provide quite a bit of useful information in the future. Dumbledore helped Harry extract his memory of Sunday and place it in the swirling bowl of Harry’s pensive.

Remus and Hermione announced that they were going grocery shopping, and would be back in an hour.

Harry made Dumbledore a mug of cocoa and opened a butterbeer for himself.

“Harry, I would like to talk with you about the attack at the Grangers.”

“What’s troubling you professor?”

“The wands. In my rather considerable experience, I have known only one man to bring three wands to a battle.”

“Let me guess, Moody?”

Dumbledore grinned at Harry. "Correct. There were eleven wands found in total, seven of them in the back garden. I can think of only two logical explanations. One is that Severus may have acquired an extra wand, and had intended to stun his fellow attackers without exposing himself. The other is that there was someone else there that we do not yet know about. I am inclined to believe the second explanation is more likely because of the injuries to Mundungus, Kingsley, and Hestia."

Dumbledore conjured a chalkboard and chalk. "Let us diagram where the attackers were. He drew a rectangle to represent the house and another smaller square to represent the detached garage. Crabbe and Goyle would come in the front. Goyle Sr. Malfoy and Severus were in the back. By your recollection where were the attackers?" Harry drew the stick figures of the five. Where were Hestia and Kingsley?

Harry drew Hestia in the back of the garden, and Kingsley closer to the side of the house.

If you wouldn't mind, please list the major actions of the attack

Harry wrote on the chalk board next to the diagram.

Hestia shouted

Malfoy called

Emma called Director Bones

Snape broke the first kitchen window

I hit Snape

Malfoy, Goyle, and fired killing curses

Hermione and I hit Malfoy

The attack at the front door

The Aurors hit Goyle”

“Let’s look at your memory. I will time it, and you watch for wands.”

When Harry fired his first stunner at Bellatrix/Snape, there were no wands on the ground, and Snape only had one in his hand. When they fired at Draco, the only wand near Snape was the one that he had dropped. When they stood up the third time, a second wand had appeared near Snape. Draco’s was by his side.

“Thus the wand most likely came from another Death Eater that was not within your field of vision. From Hestia’s warning that the Death Eaters had appeared until the Aurors stunned Thomas Goyle was approximately thirty seconds. We can deduce that Kingsley and Mundungus were not stunned by Crabbe and Goyle. My theory is that Pettigrew stunned Kingsley and Mundungus and traveled to the back garden in his rat form to escape.”

“Harry, I would never ask you to change your story, or tell a falsehood to the court. Severus certainly broke the law on Sunday and committed some minor offenses. He did damage Miss Granger’s house and did not do everything that he could to stop the attack. Please believe that Severus did not cast a killing curse at you. Had you not stunned him, he probably would have tried to stun Draco and Thomas Goyle. Admittedly he did not have much of a plan. It is likely that your testimony will carry the most weight with the court. I will not say more of this now. Harry thank you for sharing your memory with me. You can not be forced to do so in open court, and no one will ask you to take truth serum.”

He concluded. “I must leave now. Before I leave, I want to tell you how proud I am of you for having defended the Grangers so ably. Few of the Aurors would have done as well. Please enjoy your new home.”

“Thanks. Good bye Professor.”

Meanwhile, Remus and Hermione had driven over to the Tesco grocery store in Crawley. They were going up and down the aisles,

loading their cart with groceries, cleaning supplies, paper products, and the like. She asked him what sort of things he liked for dinner, brands of soap, and the everyday sort of stuff that he had been missing most of his life. Remus suggested that Hermione's parents could come over for dinner one night during the week, perhaps Thursday or Friday.

Remus could not remember a better few days in the last fifteen years. He was so happy spending carefree days with Harry and Hermione. He paid for the groceries, they bagged everything up, and found the car in the parking lot. Once they got in the car, Hermione turned to Remus, and asked "Remus, can I ask you a few questions?"

"Of course. You can always ask anything that you want."

"How much discrimination will I run into as an adult witch, being muggle born?"

Remus rubbed his face. "Ah, discrimination. There is a subject that is near and dear to my heart." He shifted the car back into park, and turned off the engine. "The wizarding world is much like what I would imagine a fancy country club to be. The old money people somehow think they are a little better than the new member who is self-made. They both pay the same dues, and on paper have the same playing privileges, but the old money players somehow are given the best tee times. The old blood wizards help each other's children start their careers, much the same I'm sure as in the muggle world. The attitudes vary. You would never notice it with Neville, but I'm certain that you would see it in his Grandmother. Your children would see none to a moderate amount, depending on who their father was."

He continued, "Hermione, is there a single doubt in your mind that Harry doesn't believe that you are completely worthy, and every bit as good as anyone he knows?"

Hermione blushed slightly. "Remus, you're right. I suppose that every girl has doubts about something - are they pretty enough, shaped OK, smart enough, you know. Before Hogwarts, I never had any real friends."

“Hermione, I do know what you mean. For 26 days each month, I try to be a decent fellow. For a few days and one night a month, I’m pretty tough to live with. I have never been able to get a decent job in the wizarding world, except for the year I spent at Hogwarts. My advice is to be aware that some people have small-minded attitudes, but not to dwell on it. I am absolutely positive that Harry believes you to be a perfect witch – very pretty, smart, a great personality, and most importantly, you are willing to put up with him.” He winked at her. “Just kidding.”

“Thank you Remus. I see the best in you too.”

“Thank you. Let’s get the groceries upstairs. OK?”

“OK.”

They brought up the grocery bags and found places to put everything away. Remus asked Harry how things went with Dumbledore.

“Good. We watched my memories of the attack a few times. He thinks that there was another person there that tried to kill Mundungus, and stunned Kingsley. We’re pretty sure that it was the attacker’s wand that was found next to Snape. That was the wand used to cast the third killing curse at me. Dumbledore was going to check with Mundungus and see if he had gotten a look at the other attacker.”

Remus asked if Hermione would like to stay for dinner. Hermione called her mum at her office from Harry’s cell phone.

“Hi Mum.”

“Hi Hermione. What’s up?”

“Mum, would it be OK if I had dinner with Harry and Remus tonight? They wanted to have someone over for their first dinner at their new home.”

“Who’s cooking?”

“Harry.”

“Good for him. OK Honey. Please be home by ten.”

“I love you Mum. Bye.”

“I love you too sweetheart. We both love you. Have fun. Say ‘Hi’ to Harry.”

One benefit of living at the Dursleys all those years is that Harry actually did know how to cook. This evening he made homemade pizza. He prepared a salad, set the table and soon they were seated. It really was good. They had a great dinner together.

For Remus, it was a dream come true to be living with those that he could honestly call family. He was grateful that Harry had agreed to his staying there. He really had lived a lonely life. Few people had ever really accepted him as a person, and most of those who had were now dead. With the gift that Sirius had left him, he could live a very comfortable life, but galleons in the bank would not give him true acceptance. Harry was the brightest spot in Remus’ life, and Remus was enjoying every minute. They really did enjoy each other’s company. Having Hermione spend time with them was the icing on the cake. He’d had a wonderful time grocery shopping with Hermione. Her smile was contagious. She was a very happy young woman. Remus thought to himself, that this was the first time that he could remember grocery shopping when he didn’t have a concern that he would have enough money to pay at the check-out. They had a great evening watching an old movie on Harry’s television.

Meanwhile Dumbledore’s conversation with the Grangers was not going as well as he had planned. With their daughter’s absence, Emma was being rather candid.

“I don’t care if he’s James Bond. I am not going to ignore the fact that he led a team of four killers into my back garden. They tried to kill our daughter, her boyfriend, my best friend and my girlfriend, as well as myself. They were going to hang her from our tree, and do who

knows what else. Professor, I have heard you use the term unforgivables – well my friend, that is exactly what our position is - unforgiving. If your wizard court lets him off, we will start with the British Police M5 unit and work our way up. Is there any part of what I am telling you that is ambiguous? Good. According to your newspaper, the idiots that he led here will get terms of fifteen years each. Being the charitable person that I am, I will settle for 2/3 of that at the prison of your choice. He can go free early if both Voldemort and Bellatrix are killed, and the kids are unhurt. I reserve the right to do an unannounced visit twice a year to verify that he is there. Do we understand each other?"

Emma was on a roll, and still gathering steam. Dumbledore let her continue without saying a word.

"I don't care if he made a promise to some spoiled brat's mother, or to the Queen Mum herself. He should have known better. A responsible parent or teacher would have put a stop to it months ago, or from what my daughter has told me years ago. How many crimes has that kid been an accessory to? How many times has that snot nosed kid been aware of crimes to come, bragging all over school about his father's exploits? He is a sick son of a witch. Are you so afraid of those kids that you don't have the stones to expel them? Are you trying to tell me that your chemistry professor didn't have enough insight that these were very troubled, high-risk children? Was he too busy playing the role of "the bad guy" to offer the discipline and common sense that any responsible parent would expect from a boarding school head of house? Does he actually possess any teaching or parenting skills? Harry's aunt, rest her soul may have had the right idea – St. Brutus' School for Incurably Criminally Boys. Did you miss any of this?"

There was silence, and Dumbledore took it as his turn to respond. "You are of course right, Dr. Granger. There were and are what any objective person would term some "bad kids" at the school, partly because there are so few schools of its type. I must say, partly in an optimistic hope that a few of the marginal kids will make good choices, and turn their lives toward the light side. I always try to see the best in people. There were many who sought to expel Harry a year ago."

“Stick to the case at hand Professor. If by the grace of God and a lot of skill, Harry hadn’t been able to protect us, what would your excuses have been? You have our terms professor. I’ll give you a week to take action. Goodnight.”

A half hour later, Harry had walked Hermione home. Remus remained a discreet distance behind. She kissed Harry at the door, and whispered, “I had a great time today Harry Potter. Thank you for letting me spend the day with you.”

Harry told Hermione that he loved spending time with her, and that he could hardly wait to see her tomorrow. The both whispered, “I love you” at the same time. Hermione went inside. Harry walked back to Remus. Remus told Harry that he had found a great girl, and that he was so happy for them.

As Dumbledore sat in his office, he thought to himself, ‘Sometimes there isn’t enough cocoa on the planet to brighten my day. Perhaps Alberforth’s idea of tending bar and watching his goats isn’t such a bad life.’ He decided that the Grangers’ were remarkably rational in their position and insightful in Severus’ shortcomings as head of house. Snape’s excessive allowances of inappropriate behavior, either real or in his role as spy could not have been beneficial to any of the students, particularly the good kids whose politics were on the fence. Either Snape, or his replacement would need to act more in line with the rest of his team.

Tuesday – 23 July

Tuesday morning arrived with as clear blue a sky as anyone could wish for. Dumbledore arrived at Amelia Bones' office at 9:00 AM.

"Well, Albus, what grand scheme have you got cooked up?"

"A few questions first, if I may, Amelia. Has anyone had the opportunity to depose Mundungus yet?"

"No. Based on the evidence, someone had cast the killing curse at him, and missed, hitting the case of Cognac that he was carrying instead. The blast knocked him down, hitting his head on the cement floor unconscious. Soaking in the cognac for two hours had left him positively pissed. We released him from a holding room late Tuesday morning. Why?"

"There is every possibility that he saw his attacker. We could use a solicitor's pensive, and possibly see who it was. Severus claims that none of the five attacked Kingsley or Mundungus. Severus claimed that he stunned Auror Jones to prevent any of the others from casting a killing curse on her. You may want to review Auror Jones' memory of the event with her, again to see if someone, possibly Peter Pettigrew was there."

He continued, "It may be worth your consideration to try a pensive memory extraction from Draco, or Thomas Goyle. It is possible that they glanced in Severus' direction, and either may have seen him fall from Harry's stupefaction jinx or have seen who has cast the third curse. It may have been cast from someone on the other side of Goyle." Dumbledore had not yet mentioned examining Harry's memory of the events. He wanted Bones to arrive at conclusions similar to his own without too much prodding on his part.

Amelia Bones had not gotten as far as she had by being a shabby investigator. She realized that Dumbledore was right, even if he did have a personal interest in the case. It didn't matter to her that she hadn't invented the suggestions. They were good ones. If Snape was telling the truth, there had to have been a sixth or seventh person there.

She knew that she could win his freedom, but unless they walked an incredibly thin tightrope, doing so would sign his death warrant with Voldemort. Rita Skeeter could be led to write a story implying that there was a lack of evidence in his specific case.

She asked Dumbledore, "Do you believe that the person who stunned Shackbolt and tried to kill Mundungus threw the wand at Bellatrix/Snape to get rid of it, or to further implicate Bellatrix?"

"I did get a chance to look at Harry's recollection of the battle. Between the time that Severus was stunned, and the time that Thomas fell, a second throw away wand appeared on the ground about ten feet from Severus. Please examine Auror Jones' report, or question her again. Perhaps Auror Dawlish should revise the wand spell report to indicate that the owner of wand number 3 is listed as unknown. Where was Severus' own wand found?"

"On his leg holster."

"I hadn't considered any intention on the part of the unidentified attacker, other than to get rid of a wand that could be traced back to the attack. I suspect that either Mundungus or Hestia saw Peter, either in his rat form or as himself. That would establish that he was there. Harry's memory, if he chooses to share it with the Wizengamot would establish that Severus did not have the extra wand." Dumbledore chose not to mention his conversation with Draco yet.

She replied, "OK. I'll see to it. Please keep in mind that keeping Snape out of Azkaban for attempted murder doesn't make him innocent. He would still receive his fines, be convicted of the other charges, most likely found unfit to teach in Briton, and have to face the Grangers. Pray to Merlin that Mrs. Granger does not have a wine bottle in her hand at the time. She has every right to charge him in muggle court, and you would do well not to fight it."

"Thank you for looking into this so thoroughly, Amelia. Regarding Dr. Granger, you are of course correct."

Tuesday's Prophet was kinder to Dumbledore than anything that he could have hoped for.

Death Eaters Charged

Story by Rita Skeeter

Four Death Eaters were charged yesterday, each with identical counts including; Attempted Murder, Damage to Property, Possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.

The suspected Death Eaters were identified as:

Thomas Goyle – age 42

Gregory Goyle – age 16

Vincent Crabbe – age 16

Draco Malfoy – age 16

A fifth person had been arrested at the scene, but has not yet been charged. Speculation exists that there may be a lack of evidence in his case.

A trial date has not been announced, but is expected to begin in the next two weeks. It has not been announced if there will be separate or individual trials. Wizengamot Chief, Albus Dumbledore could not be reached for comment.

If convicted, the four face the following maximum penalties:

Attempted murder – 15 years Azkaban

Damage to property – 10 x the value of the damaged property

Possession of an unauthorized wand – 1,000 Galleons

Possession of Death Eater paraphernalia – 2,000 Galleons

Underage magic - Expulsion

This reporter believes that the sooner these menaces to wizarding society are thrown in prison, the better.

There were no group photographs this time, only the individual photos of the four charged, and one of the hangman's noose. Rita knew that she was sowing IOUs with this, and knew better than to ask why. There obviously were lives on the line. She had previously owed a draft of the story over to Bones under the pretense of verifying that there were no factual errors. Rita knew that asking approval on what was very obviously a sensitive case, would gain her many granted favors down the road. Strangely the request to keep any references to Snape out of the paper had not come from the usual channels – some junior Auror. Instead it came from the most unlikely source, Harry Potter himself.

On Tuesday for the first time ever Harry awoke in his own bed in his own home. "Thank you Sirius," he muttered to himself. He would need to do some shopping, and get some things on the walls. He got up, showered, got dressed, and started making breakfast.

Remus was in the pub, reading the Sun when his cellular telephone rang.

"Hi Remus, it's Hermione."

"I would have expected you to simply walk over rather than call."

"I wanted to ask you about having a birthday party of some sort for Harry. Do you think he'd be happier with a larger group, or just a little group?"

"I don't know. To my knowledge he has only ever had one birthday party, and it was quite a large party. What do you think?"

"If we had a big party, I was thinking about the Black Dog. If we had a little party, I was thinking about Harry's space above the Black Dog. My parents aren't really up for too much wizarding company right now."

"I understand. Give me a couple of hours. I'll check with Tim, and see if he is interested in closing the place on the 31st for a private party. I'll call you, if I don't see you first. Also, Harry wanted to do some shopping and go to Diagon Alley this afternoon. I am certain that he would want you to come."

"Thanks, Remus. I'd love to come along."

"I could owl Ron if you would like. You two haven't had much of a chance to see him this summer."

"If you want." She didn't sound enthused. Perhaps he was best not to interfere. Remus had been on the outside, watching a romance grow years before, and decided that Harry had enough complexity in his life, without "Uncle Remus" stirring the pot. Harry didn't need a parent in his life now, so much as a nonjudgmental mentor. He knew that the time for Harry to begin a more intense level of battle training was rapidly approaching, and if he wanted to have a fun week with his girlfriend, who would deny him?

Remus gave her an out. "Perhaps we could invite Ron another time. We'll be ready to leave about noon. Would you like to come over for lunch, before we leave?"

"Thanks Remus. You're the best." She sounded much happier.

"OK. In the mean time, I'll check with Tim. Bye." He went upstairs, found that Harry had gotten up, and had just finished making breakfast. The pancakes were very good, and the coffee was excellent. He thanked Harry for making breakfast, and told him that Hermione had called about going shopping that afternoon. He volunteered to clean the dishes, realizing that Harry was far and away the better cook of the two. Harry's OWL scores arrived after breakfast. He had passed everything except History of Magic.

Hermione arrived about 10:00. They made their respective shopping lists for Diagon Alley

Books

Butterbeer

Wizards Wireless

School Robes

Stop at www

Gift for Hermione (on Harry's list)

Gift for Harry (on Hermione's list)

Harry and Hermione showed each other and Remus their OWL scores. Remus was amazed that anybody could be so good at so many subjects. Hermione had even taken the OWL for Muggle studies, even though she had dropped the class. He congratulated them both. They locked the door, and got into the car.

Every trip to Diagon Alley was an adventure for Harry. They drove into London, and found a spot to park near the Leaky Cauldron. They walked into the dingy pub (Harry had developed more of a discriminating eye when it came to pubs, living above one), said 'hello' to Tom who nodded but did not say their names, as they passed out the back door to the bricked back alley. Hermione tapped the bricks, which opened into an arch, allowing them to enter. Remus walked back to the pub for a moment, and made arrangements to have six cases of butterbeer ready when they returned in a few hours.

He met up with Harry and Hermione at Madam Malkin's. Hermione loved shopping with Harry. He was willing to try things on, and hold things up. Harry ordered three sets of school robes, a set of dark blue robes for other occasions, and a new set of dress robes that Hermione had picked out. He talked her into a matching set of dark

blue robes, an ice blue set of dress robes that looked stunning on her, and a new set of school robes. The both dragged Remus over, and picked out two sets of robes for him. He smiled to himself at the thought of having two people who really cared about him. Madam Malkin said that they would be ready in about two hours.

Next, they went to Gringotts. Harry made a withdrawal of 5,000 Galleons, more than the sum of all his previous withdrawals. Remus was tempted to say something, but remembered that everything that Harry owned to wear had been purchased for him last week by Hermione, including his shorts. Remus had only made 5,000 Galleons in a year one year of his life, and had a hard time viewing that much money as spending cash.

Harry purchased two magical cameras, a wizarding wireless, a magical bracelet for Hermione, owl treats, wrist wand holsters for both of them, gifts for Ron, Neville, Ginny, and Luna. Hermione went off to do some shopping on her own for a few minutes, while Remus and Harry went to Quality Quidditch Supplies. They went back to the car to drop off their packages, and Remus picked up the butterbeer from Tom. They decided that they would stop off at the Weasley store and then have tea.

If the Gringotts building could be described as understated elegance, the front entrance to Weasleys Wizarding Wheezes could only be compared to a carnival. Flashes, buzzes, bangs, and aromas assaulted their senses as the stepped into the store. Trays of stink bombs, canary creams, fireworks, fake wands, and tricks for every occasion were on display. George saw them and in his best fake oily voice called out, "Mr. Potter, Ms. Granger, Mr. Lupin, how nice, how nice to see you." They all started laughing at George's impression of Mr. Borgin, the shady shopkeeper from Harry's second year. They got the tour and ran into Ron in the back. He looked a little embarrassed at seeing them. "Hi Harry. Hi Hermione. I'm sorry I haven't written yet this summer. I've been working here a lot and spending some time with Luna. How about you?"

Harry replied, "I've been spending quite a bit of time getting to know Susan Bone's Aunt. Remus is staying with me."

“What about your aunt and uncle?” It was obvious that Ron was clueless about what had been going on in Harry’s life. Dumbledore had kept things really quiet, and Harry didn’t want to go into a lot of details at the moment.

“I’m staying at another place now. How are things going here?” Harry moved the conversation back to Ron’s side of the fence.

Ron liked working with his brothers, and felt better about himself with some of his own money. Hermione asked how Luna was, believing that she had heard his original mumbled response. They had been dating, which removed a complication for Harry and Hermione.

George left Lee Jordan in charge at the counter. The Weasleys and Harry’s group went upstairs for tea. Ron told his news of working at the store, and mentioned the long hours that he had been putting in. It was obvious that he was very focused on his job and seeing Luna at night. They had grown to really like each other’s company. Ron was having a pretty good summer. The logistics just did not make it easy for them to see each other as neither the Granger home nor Harry’s place were connected to the floo network.

Hermione told of her summer with Ron half-listening until she came to the attack on the parent’s home last Sunday.

“Blimey, that was your house? What happened?”

She told him the basics of the story, leaving out the part about Snape, explaining that they had been sent out of the house while it was being cleaned up, and that the Aurors were gone by the time that they had returned.

“Harry, you really kicked some Death Eater arse! I wish I could have seen it.”

Harry shook his head and had a sad look on his face. “No you wouldn’t - not really. There was screaming, flying glass, doors being smashed in, blood, and terror in good people’s hearts. It was a miracle that no one was killed.”

Hermione chirped in, "It was good luck that no one was killed, but Harry had a lot to do with that." He had downed most of the Death Eaters by the time that help had arrived. She beamed at him, and squeezed his hand.

Ron, came back, not having listened to a word. "Just think, with Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle off the team. Slytherin won't stand a chance this year."

Fred and George who had read the paper congratulated Harry and Hermione. They sent Ron downstairs to get something, and told him that Dumbledore had called a meeting of the Order for that night. Remus mentioned that the topic of the meeting was likely to center on the fifth Death Eater. Harry mentioned that it was time to get going. They left shortly after. On the drive home, Remus asked Harry if there was a reason that he did not want to share his news with Ron.

Harry replied, "Ron was having a great time telling us about his job, and about Luna. I wanted to let him have his moment. Besides the unpublished details of the attack are really Order and Ministry business. Ron is a lot of good things, but he can't keep a secret to save his life."

They carried all of their new things upstairs. Hermione had to get home for dinner.

Harry would be over to the Grangers after dinner, while Remus went to the Order meeting.

After Hermione left, Remus helped Harry put everything away. He asked Harry if Ron had known that Harry and Hermione had started dating. Harry thought for a minute before answering, "We hadn't really talked about telling anyone yet. Something we can do tonight I suppose. How long do you think you will be tonight?"

"Harry, it could vary. Dumbledore has to tell the Order that one of their own was involved in an attempt to kill you and Hermione. Hear me out. It will be very divisive to the Order. There will be those who will stand and say that Snape was just following the others in his role as spy, and those who will say that he should have stopped it, or

never gone along. The evidence is that the attack was directed at Hermione, but there will be those who may believe that it was directed at you. There are many in the Order who place a higher value on your life than another student, simple because they all know you. It doesn't make it right, but their opinions are real. Dumbledore will need to button up the meeting quickly, or things could get out of hand for him. To answer your question, I expect to be at the Grangers by ten."

After dinner Remus walked Harry over to the Grangers, and apparated to Grimmauld Place. They were enjoying the evening out in the back garden.

"Did any of your neighbors say anything about Sunday?" Harry asked Mr. Granger.

"No. The Collins whose house is behind the back garden weren't home, and no one said a thing. There really wasn't much noise, other than the windows breaking. Your wands don't make a lot of noise, and the whole affair only lasted a few minutes."

"I'm really glad that you and Mr. Granger weren't hurt."

Emma knew that Harry meant what he said, and felt very close to the young man. "Thanks Harry. We're glad that you and Hermione are safe too. Thank you."

"So Harry, How did you do on your wizarding tests?"

"Pretty good. I received the highest mark awarded in forty years in Defense. I did well in Charms, Transfiguration, Potions, and Care of Magical Creatures too. I'm really happy for Hermione, being named the top student of the year. That's brilliant!"

"Have you heard from your Uncle?"

Harry shook his head sadly. He doubted that he would hear from uncle Vernon again. "No. He probably just wants to be left alone."

"You're right. Speaking of that, we will leave you two alone. Come in later, we will make some lemonade."

Harry looked into Hermione's eyes for a moment. "Hermione, are you OK with telling people that we are a couple?"

"Of course I am. Why do you ask?"

"You didn't mention anything today to Ron. I didn't know what to think."

"I kind of felt the same way that you did. I wanted to let him have his moment. How about you, are you OK telling people?"

"What should I say, that you thought enough about me to save my life when I was feeling really crappy, that you are the prettiest and smartest witch in the school, that you see the real me, and you still love me?"

She blushed. "That would be fine with me. Thank you very much, Harry Potter. I do love you. Harry?"

"Huh?"

"When you're done looking at me, would you come over here? There is a spot right next to me, and it would be easier for me to snog you senseless if we weren't sitting across from each other."

Fifteen minutes later a very happy Harry and Hermione went inside. After they came in, Mrs. Granger made a point to lock the door, something that she never would have thought about a week ago.

Harry and Hermione made plans to visit their library on Wednesday morning.

Mrs. Granger commented that it was really nice of Remus to take them everywhere that they needed to go. They both agreed. They spent the evening watching a video.

By eight that evening the entire Order except Snape were seated in the great room at Grimmauld place. They had all read the Prophet's account of the raid, or had been there, and wanted to hear the story behind the story. Dumbledore knew that this had the potential to be the most divisive issue that the Order had faced in since the attack on Lilly and James. Once again Pettigrew and Severus were in the thick of it.

He decided that the winning move was to start with the thousand word version, sit back and let them talk it out, then attempt to make any course corrections as needed. Severus had few personal friends in the Order – though most members at least respected his efforts. Few who had school age children, or who had been his student would ever forgive his ruthless teaching style, and many netted the two aspects together against Severus' benefit.

"As most of you know, there was an attack on the Granger home in West Sussex last Sunday, at 10:00 AM. At the property at the time were Doctor and Doctor Granger, Hermione, Harry Potter, and a friend of the family, Dr. Turnbull. Kingsley and Hestia were there patrolling for the Order. Mundungus was also at the house making a delivery."

Dumbledore continued. "An as yet unidentified assailant attempted to kill Mundungus in the garage of the Granger house prior to the main attack. Their killing curse missed him, instead hitting a carton that he was carrying, knocking him to the floor unconscious. Mundungus, we are all relieved that you have recovered. We believe that the same assailant, or a different unidentified assailant stunned Kingsley at about the same time. Kingsley, we are equally relieved that both you and Hestia have also recovered."

"Hestia saw Kingsley fall, and called out a warning before being stunned by one of the five Death Eaters that had portkeyed in to form the main body of the raiding party. Two of the Death Eaters went around the front of the house and stormed the door a minute after the firefight started in the back garden."

"The first Death Eater shattered one of the kitchen windows. Inside Harry Potter stood up to stun the first attacker, and the attacker was

hit. Immediately after, three killing curses were cast at Harry, two came from the other Death Eaters, the third cast from an unknown source. A second window was shattered. Harry and Hermione fired stunners at the same time, hitting another Death Eater. A few seconds later the other two Death Eaters crashed through the front door. Hermione's mother and her friend each threw a bottle of wine at the attackers, with Dr. Granger's bottle hitting one of the Death Eaters in the head. Harry Potter stunned the other."

"At about that time, a team of Aurors arrived, and immediately stunned the fifth Death Eater. They searched the area finding wands, and a hangman's rope to be used with the intention of lynching Miss Granger in front of her parents."

"We have evidence that one of the wands found in the back yard was thrown there by one of the unidentified assailants."

"While waiting processing, the Death Eaters were photographed by Rita Skeeter's photographer. During the photography, the assailant originally thought to be Bellatrix LeStrange turned out to be Severus Snape. He had used Polyjuice potion to impersonate Bellatrix and had been stunned by Harry. The other Death Eaters have been identified as Thomas Goyle, his son Gregory, Vincent Crabbe, and Draco Malfoy. They do not know that Severus had taken the place of Bellatrix."

"All five have been interrogated, and are in individual holding cells. Severus has not been identified in the Prophet. The other four were identified in today's issue."

"The other four have been charged with attempted murder, possession of an unauthorized wand, damage to property and possession of Death Eater paraphernalia. The three students were also charged with unauthorized underage use of magic in a muggle area. A trial date of late next week will be announced tomorrow. I have not yet conferred with the other heads of the Wizengamot to determine if five individual trials will take place, or two trials, one for the four, the other for Severus."

The Order members had sat in rapt silence, hanging on every word. The Grangers were not faceless victims. Some of the members knew the dentists, most knew Hermione, and everyone knew Harry.

Dumbledore concluded. "I would like to open the meeting up first for clarifying questions, then later for statements of viewpoint. Everyone who has a question or viewpoint will be allowed to speak. Can we agree on that? Thank you."

"Had Severus mentioned that he would be going on a raid?" asked Molly Weasley.

"No. He hadn't told anyone."

"When you say anyone, are you referring to our side, or anyone at all?" asked Remus.

"His being there remains unknown to the arrested Death Eaters, who believe that Bellatrix was also captured. Voldemort doubtless knows that someone else took her place."

"What is the significance of the extra wand?" asked Tom the barkeep.

"Each of the wands were tested for the last spell cast. There is every likelihood that the unknown assailant threw the wand in the yard after casting the killing curse with it. The investigative issue for Severus is finding out who cast the third killing curse, or at least proving beyond doubt that the wands that Severus used did not cast a killing curse at Harry Potter."

"What legal issues are Severus facing, and how is he reacting?" asked Tonks.

"In the wizarding world, he could possibly evade the attempted murder charge, if Harry were to testify on his behalf, or the other assailant is captured, and confesses in the next few days. He will be charged, and most likely found guilty of damage to property, possession of an unauthorized wand, and possession of Death Eater paraphernalia. These three charges are punishable by substantial fines and most likely the loss of his teaching position."

"You framed your answer within the contest of the wizarding world. What else is there?" Amos Diggory asked.

"The Grangers have every right to also press charges against any or all of those involved in the attack. It is of no surprise that they are more than a little upset over the attack, the relationship of the participants to Hogwarts, and the fact that Severus has yet to be charged. They believe him at least equally responsible for the attack, and are demanding that he serve time in a prison. It is their right to feel that way."

"Did Snape offer an explanation for joining in the raid as opposed to helping us stop it?" Moody asked.

"He had made a wizard's pledge to Narcissa to do everything that he could to prevent Draco from being killed, or from doing something to earn a death sentence."

Arthur Weasley asked, "Have the prisoners been interrogated to identify operations against any other wizard homes?"

"Draco implied that there are other operations being planned. I intend to see him again tomorrow and learn what he is willing to tell us."

Hestia asked, "Why not use Veritaserum?"

"His outer facade seems to be crumbling. I am curious to see what he will voluntarily tell me."

"Are there other questions? If not, let's move on to viewpoints."

"What is your personal viewpoint on Snape's actions?" Shacklebolt did not look like a happy man.

"I recognize that Severus risked his own safety, his career, and his freedom for what most people would consider an unworthy cause. I recognize that there may have been other ways of stopping Draco that would likely prove less costly to Severus. I recognize that not

telling us in advance was a serious mistake. He was caught in the hallway without a pass.”

Lupin spoke up. “I agree with all of your viewpoints Albus, but we seem to be forgetting that Snape made decisions that placed the safety of young Malfoy ahead of the safety of the Grangers, Harry, Dr. Turnbull, Hestia, Kingsley, or Mundungus. He made a choice. He got caught, and we seem to be feeling bad for the criminals while ignoring the victims. I’m not trying to turn this into an old family issue, but it has some of the appearances.”

“Sirius made a similar pledge to James and Lilly. No one thought ill of him for risking all in keeping that pledge.”

Molly stood up. “We all understand the finality of a wizards pledge. What can we do to help Severus?”

Remus came back, “We haven’t agreed that his actions warrant rescue, have we? There are no votes on the table.”

Dumbledore did not want this to get out of hand. Indeed it had the potential to rapidly splinter the order.

Minerva stood up. “Before we argue about what we are or are not willing to do for Severus, it may be worth asking, what if anything has he asked us to do on his behalf?”

Dumbledore stood up relieved at Minerva’s change of direction. “Severus has asked us to do nothing. As always, he has taken full responsibility for his actions. He understood the risks every day that he worked with the order. He understood the risks of getting caught last Sunday. If possible, I would like to see him avoid fifteen years in Azkaban. If possible, I would like to keep him out of muggle prison if it does not mean estranging the other focus of the Order.”

He continued, “It is unethical to coach witnesses so that their testimony better aligns with our personal wishes. It is equally unethical to deprive the Grangers of their right to press charges against Severus in the muggle courts. It is doubtless that their lives were in jeopardy, and Severus has yet to convince anyone that he

had a plan to stop the other four from achieving their objective. Had Harry, Hestia, and Kingsley not been there, I have every reason to believe that we would have had tragic results. Severus did not have a well thought out plan to stop the attackers. The action that might save Severus time in prison would be for Peter to testify that he cast the curse, or the capture of Bellatrix.”

“The Wizengamot has the power to set his trial date, or delay it indefinitely. I believe that it is his best interest that a trial be delayed for a while.”

Lupin stood up. “Albus, speaking for myself, I know that you are trying to do what is best for everyone. Everyone here has accepted the risk of consequences as a result of their work with the Order. I don't expect you to make allowances that I am an Order member if I go out and commit a crime, regardless of my reasoning for doing so. In my opinion, Severus was acting completely outside of Order business, and got caught committing a crime. In my opinion, there should be no allowances made, no subtle influence of anyone's testimony in the name of seeking the truth, and no influences against anyone's right to press charges for a crime, or wrongdoing that undisputedly was committed. In my observation, Snape benefited for many years with his close association with the Malfoys, and now is being asked to pick up the tab.” Lupin sat down.

Tonks stood up. “I agree with Remus.”

Moody Hestia and Shackbolt stood up looked at each other, nodded, and said as one, “We do too.” Minerva nodded. Tom nodded. Hagrid, Fred and George nodded. Mundungus, Victor, and a dozen of the others look uncomfortable, and fortunately remained silent.

Dumbledore was frustrated. This was exactly what he didn't want to happen. “Our central business is to fight the dark side and protect those that do. There is nothing for us to decide tonight, and no one wants Severus' legal issues to become divisive to the Order. Most of all Severus does not want that to happen. I am not confusing the silence of some who have chosen not to speak with implied concurrence of another's viewpoint. No one was killed, or severely

injured, and four Death Eaters will most likely be going to Azkaban. Thank you all for coming this evening. I wish you a safe journey home this evening. Good night my friends.” He had closed the meeting in such a manner as to discourage hall talk, which in this case would only serve to be divisive.

When they were going home Remus told Harry of the evening’s events. They both wondered why Dumbledore hadn’t been more specific with the details of the story.

Minerva was at the breakfast table Wednesday morning before Dumbledore, an uncharacteristic event. Flitwick and Sprout joined her. Flitwick commented, “It is good to see you again Minerva, and Pomona. I hope your holidays have been restful. My vacation to Thailand was fascinating. The people are very friendly, and the accommodations were excellent. I rode on the top of an elephant. I haven’t done that in fifty years. From the newspaper accounts here, it sounds like young Harry Potter has been dismantling Voldemort’s Death Eaters faster than he can replace them. Did I read that another five were captured this week?” Minerva chewed on her bacon strip longer than necessary.

Dumbledore sat down. “You did Filius, you did, and you are correct. Harry did stop several of them himself, and most certainly saved some lives again. Thank you all for coming today. I know that we had not planned on meeting until the first of August, but changes have come, and I would like your input. As most of you know, Severus has been acting as a spy for the light side against Voldemort, since his return a little more than a year ago. He took part in the raid last Sunday against the Grangers. His participation in the attack was authorized neither by our side, or Voldemort, rather a personal attempt to keep Draco Malfoy from committing a crime that would earn him a life sentence. In doing so, Severus committed enough minor offenses to make it likely that I will accept his resignation that he has given me. It is likely that he will end up serving time in a muggle prison, or some alternate arrangement, if one can be negotiated.”

He concluded, "With respect to possible replacements, should the need arise, I am very interested in hearing your suggestions regarding candidates. I am looking for younger people that have good personal skills, and some teaching skills, as much or more than their being world famous experts in their field. Our experience with Mr. Lockhart illustrates that fame may not equate to knowledge, or the ability to transfer knowledge to our students."

"When you say younger, Albus, could you be more specific?" asked Flitwick. "Relative to you and I, younger would include 98 of the wizarding population. Also are you asking for Potions candidates, Defense candidates, or both?"

"The most likely case is that we will need to fill both positions. We will also need a head of house for Slytherin. Someone who will not coddle those students who have already made up their mind to be junior Death Eaters, or see those who have as possessing some sort of prestige. I was recently reminded that we have no obligation to teach those who are determined to become criminals."

The three heads of houses stole glances at each other and collectively smiled. Christmas had come early.

Professor Flitwick spoke first, "In the event that we may need to fill the Potions position, you may wish to speak to Professor Wo Pei Chang. Chang is Cho Chang's uncle who has come to live in Briton to spend more time with his brother's family. His English is flawless, and he knows his craft. I believe that the students would find him nurturing and patient."

Professor Sprout spoke next, "I think the answer for the Defense position is obvious, though radical. To my knowledge, there are no formal age limitations, or formal competency certifications required to teach here. A handful or more of our current students owe their very lives to him. Unlike the other candidates that we may also consider, we have first hand proof of his results. The kids who were in that secret club of his that took OWLs or NEWTs in June averaged a half of a grade better on the practical portions than the previous year. Certainly it wasn't attributable to 'hem hem. there's something in my

throat' Umbridge. The trick would be to create some type of bridge position, so we could fulfil our obligations to him as well."

Flitwick came back, "We don't even have breathing requirements for a teaching position. Why should we worry and fuss about certifications? Most of us are here, because we love the school, and are good at what we teach. Does anyone have any doubts with respect to his ability? I fancied myself a dueling champion during the Great War. He could kick my arse in a blink. I seriously doubt that I could touch him on my best day, let alone now. We need to look at what we are teaching the kids, and add some topics – conditioning, healing, world politics, and business. These don't have to replace what we are currently offering, or even be full time topics, but could be additions."

Sprout agreed. "Look at the twins, one minute, they're expelled, the next successful business men. I wish I'd had the foresight to partner with them, or invest in their business."

Dumbledore nodded. "I will take both of your recommendations under advisement. Minerva, do you have anything to add?"

"With several recent replacements on the board of governors, all which clearly are in the light side, I see this as an opportunity to position Hogwarts a notch over from center with respect of politics and attitude. Director Bones was able to respond quickly at the Granger raid because she carries a muggle cellular telephone. I not saying that Harry wouldn't have kicked everyone's arse anyway, but it would have taken his owl Hedwig a half-hour to reach the ministry from West Sussex. Teaching our students survival skills should be first among equals in our priorities. I am told that Susan Bones was able to keep her attackers at bay for almost twenty minutes until help arrived. Her mother told me that she said it was solely due to skills that she had learned in the evening defense class. I would be sitting here crowing about my accomplishments as a great teacher, except that I had nothing to do with it."

The others nodded in agreement.

“Thank you all for your input. I will see you all again on the first of August. Please have a wonderful week.”

As the heads of houses were leaving, Dumbledore received an owl.

Professor Dumbledore

You asked me if I could remember anything else about the attack on Sunday. When the attackers were searched, all had identical wrist wand holders. Snape only had one – on his left wrist. If he intended to carry a third wand, why wouldn't he have used a double wand holster?

That's all I can think of.

Tonks

As she was getting ready to leave, Dumbledore asked, “Minerva, can you stay for a minute?”

“Of course.”

Dumbledore asked, “Did you lead Pomona and Filius to this conclusion, or did they arrive at it on their own?”

“Albus, I never said a word. I think Pomona was deeply affected by the attack on Susan Bones. There's not a doubt in my mind that she owes her life to Potter.”

Dumbledore sipped his coffee. “I feel that Harry's needs have strayed from those that can be met by the traditional curriculum. He needs individual tutoring on Auror level fighting skills, conditioning, and healing. He needs to be able to manage a considerable amount of money, and he needs to acquire a workable defense against Tom, including the form of legimancy that Tom has used against Harry. He could be served by traditional classes in Charms, Transfiguration, and Potions.”

Minerva asked, “Are you going to let him back on the house Quidditch team?”

“Of course, but I’m not certain that practicing flying maneuvers three evenings a week would be the best use of his time. I think he may rather have some time to spend with Miss Granger outside the company of Mr. Weasley, studying of course. The tone of the Quidditch games may change this year. Slytherin house will have a new team, as well as Gryffindor house. Perhaps we could have a student – staff game this year.”

Are you certain that Severus will be unable to teach this year?”

He continued, “I believe that Severus has taught his last class at Hogwarts. I will contact Chang today and make a preliminary inquiry. I believe that Severus will evade serving time in Azkaban. There are several private muggle institutions that could better accommodate his situation. Will you have a preliminary conversation with Harry regarding his career interests?”

“I will arrange it for later this afternoon. I’ll send an owl now.”

“Thank you Minerva. I will contact Alastor and the others.”

About noon, Dumbledore stopped back to the Ministry to see Severus.

“Hello Headmaster.”

“Hello Severus. I’ve done some investigating. We’ve found evidence that Peter Pettigrew cursed Mundungus, and by association, Kingsley. The Grangers have stated their intent to file charges against you through the muggle courts. The minor charges will be filed through the Wizengamot. I anticipate that the total fines will not be in excess of four thousand Galleons. Do you have sufficient funds to cover the fines, or could I help you?” Dumbledore knew that Snape was not a wealthy man.

“I’m fine, but thank you for asking.”

“Severus in the event that either the Wizengamot or the muggle court system imposes prison time, how can I best help you?”

“I have my potions equipment, some personal possessions, and a cottage where I spend the summers. I will need to find a secure storage space to store the equipment and safely dispose of the potions that were in the process of being brewed. If there is a small space within the castle that I could use.”

“Consider it done, my friend. Should you decide that I could possibly help you with funds, don’t hesitate to say something.”

“Lupin will need to find another source of Wolfsbane potion. I would recommend contacting Professor Chang. I believe that he is in the country visiting from China. I do not know him personally, but his reputation is excellent.”

“I will attend to that as well. The private prisons within the muggle court system have a work release program that may interest you. There is a cost that possibly could be offset in part by the work that is performed.”

He continued, “It is my belief that the school board of governors will force a resignation should you be convicted of the fineable offenses. As such, if it is still your intent, I will regretfully accept your resignation as a Hogwarts Professor. I am asking you to please withdraw your resignation from the Order. You have been a valued member of the group, and I hope will continue to be in the future. I have every confidence that you will get past this situation.”

“As you wish Headmaster. There is one other thing.” Snape hesitated. Dumbledore was his friend, perhaps his only friend. “Please talk with Potter. I honestly didn’t know that he was there. I had no intention of causing him harm. I...”

Dumbledore did not need to hear Severus embarrass himself. “I know what you are trying to say Severus. I will make certain that they understand.”

"Thank you. I will see you later, Headmaster. Do not worry about me. I will be fine."

Next Dumbledore went to visit Draco. Dumbledore felt certain that young Malfoy would be quite co-operative. A cement floor bed and a coffee tin stool tended to do wonders with young aristocrats who had spent most of their life talking big, and doing little real work.

"Good afternoon Draco. How are you today?"

"OK Professor, and you?"

"Splendid thank you. There is nothing like the company of a spirited young lady. I'm sorry, I digress. We were talking about other Death Eater training and upcoming operations last time."

"I told you that I have nothing to tell you."

"Draco, how many nights do you think you will survive in your cell with a dementor floating outside the door? A week, a month, six months? It won't matter what you have to tell me after you have been sentenced, and having seen much of the evidence, I have little doubt that you will be convicted of the crimes that Director Bones has charged you with."

Draco knew that his options for living to be twenty-one were rapidly evaporating. "What do you want to know?"

"Who are the other Death Eaters?"

"I have only been to one large group meeting, last December. The people that I saw in the house were Bellatrix, Greg, Vince, Thomas, Severus, Delores, and Rosier."

"Severus Snape?" Dumbledore did his best to sound surprised.

"Yes."

"What operations are being planned?"

“Delores is planning an operation with Bellatrix. I believe that Rosier is also planning an operation with Travis and one of the Borgins. Both would serve as training meetings for new recruits.”

“How is Voldemort being financed?”

“I’m not certain. I believe that Father was involved.”

“Who is currently living in Riddle Manor?”

“Bellatrix, Peter, and frequently Voldemort.”

“What students or recent graduates are being recruited?”

“Warrington, Flint, Bullstrode, Derrick and Marietta.”

“Who was doing the recruiting?”

“My father, McNair, and someone who works for Bones. Now I believe Umbridge is working on that.”

“Draco, if you believe that Voldemort is really going to win this war, and that he will find out what you have told me, you just signed your own Death Warrant. If you believe otherwise, we should talk again in a few days. Enjoy your day.”

Minerva had agreed to meet Harry in the Black Dog pub Wednesday at three. She had rehearsed what she wanted to say for several hours, and hoped to make a sale. Harry invited her up to his flat. She commented on the good taste of the decorating before getting down to business. She had an uncharacteristic smile on her face. “Mr. Potter, I would like to congratulate you on your fine OWL scores. Tell me, are you still interested in becoming an Auror?”

“Director Bones has talked with me about it. She said that she would take me into the program if I got NEWTs in Defense, Transfiguration, Charms, and a class of my choice.”

“Does that interest you?”

“I think so.”

“Have you ever considered teaching?”

“What do you mean?”

“Harry, our last career conversation was cut short, and was not held under the best circumstances. Could we start it again? Based in your OWL results, the DA results, yes we know about your group, and what we know about you, I see two career paths that you could easily take – teaching and law enforcement. Wizarding law enforcement has two main branches, investigative and enforcement. There are the Aurors who spend most of their time in investigative work, and the Hit Wizards, who are primarily enforcement and capture. You have a keen eye for detail, think extraordinarily fast on your feet, and possess superb reflexes – leaving both branches of law enforcement open to you, as I suspect Director Bones probably mentioned. As you know, law enforcement is dangerous work. You have seen Moody’s battle scars from fifty years of law enforcement. I know that they rarely recruit students from school, but I believe that two people from Hogwarts are currently being recruited for future enrollment into their program. Law enforcement doesn’t pay a lot of money, but for those who like the work, it is very satisfying.”

Harry asked, “What about teaching?”

“Harry, for the right person, teaching is remarkably rewarding, again not in money, rather in job satisfaction. You may have experienced a taste of it last year in your defense group as members learned the spells that you showed them.”

She continued, “If you are interested, Professor Dumbledore is prepared to offer you a part-time position to let you see for yourself.”

“Would saying yes to one mean saying no to the other?”

“I don’t think so. I believe that he has some ideas regarding classes that you would take to best suit your, shall we say individual needs.

Mr. Potter, speaking strictly for myself, I would be honored if you would consider Professor Dumbledore's offer. Shall I call him in? He is waiting downstairs."

"Please." She went to get him. A minute later Dumbledore opened the door.

"Hello Harry. I would like to offer you a part time teaching position at Hogwarts teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts with Alastor Moody and a guest speaker teaching the theory portion. It would involve substantially expanding the role of practical studies instructor that you so ably organized last year. I will personally arrange your own class schedule so that you could attend the classes that you need along with the topics that I would like you tutored in."

"What classes would I be taking?"

Defense against Tom Riddle

Healing

Charms

Transfiguration

Potions

Business

Human transfiguration

Apparition

"You would teach your classes in the afternoons and the occasional evening."

"I would ask you to consider if you would like to be on the Quidditch team this year. Your ban is of course, lifted. I am certain that professor McGonagall would be delighted to have you on the team, either as Seeker, or Seeker and Captain. Your time may be better

spent with some of your teaching activities, or activities with the Order, should you accept an invitation to join. Yes, Miss Granger will also be invited to join the Order.”

Minerva spoke up, “Harry, I know that you love flying. Winning the Quidditch cup another time won’t save lives, and there are lives to be saved this year. I would be honored to have you join us at the staff table on the first of September, but I realize that it is a big commitment.”

“I am very interested. What are the terms?”

Dumbledore smiled at his young friend. “Harry, the terms are as follows:

You need to pass a practical exam given by the Aurors in August.

You may use the staff living quarters if you wish.

You will have unrestricted access to both the school and my personal library.

There is no curfew.

You and a guest may visit Hogsmede every Saturday from 6AM until 9PM.

You will receive ½ of a starting teacher salary.

You may award or subtract points or order detentions subject to school guidelines.

You are expected to act in a professional manner and not abuse your privileges.

You may wear teacher’s robes in the afternoons and evenings.

You will still retain membership in Gryffindor house as it suits you.

You may set the curriculum and agenda for the practical aspect of your class.

You will need to coordinate the agenda with the theory instructors.

The overall curriculum needs to be submitted for approval by the twenty second of August.

Except for Saturdays and Order activities, you must remain on the school grounds.

You may wish to purchase an expanded trunk.

You may wish to make use of the excellent reference library that you own.

“If you are interested, here is your contract.”

“I accept. Thank you for the offer. I will not disappoint either of you.” Harry signed the document, and handed it back to Professor Dumbledore.”

“Thank you Harry. As you need it, please see Professor McGonagall or myself for assistance in your class agendas. Also, I would ask that you meet with Alastor and decide on course books as soon as you can, preferably by the second of August, so we can notify the students what they need to purchase.”

“Also aside from Miss Granger, please do not mention your non-traditional classes or topics to the other students.”

“I won’t Professor.”

“Thank you again Harry. It would only be fair to mention that you are the first defense instructor in recent memory that received unanimous endorsement from all of the other Heads of Houses. We really appreciate your decision to share your skills with the other students.”

After seeing Harry, Dumbledore returned to the Ministry to see Amelia Bones.

She greeted him, "Good afternoon Professor. I found Mr. Fletcher and we checked his memory of the attack. A short balding man cursed him, walking away before he hit the ground. The wand could have been the one found in the back garden, we don't know for certain. What was odd was that the man was running from the direction of the back garden and seemed to have stumbled upon Fletcher."

"I have asked Harry to come see me tomorrow morning. If he volunteers to show me his memory, and I see the same things that you described, I may not charge Snape except for the financial charges, though he still may face prison time in muggle prison. Does he possess sufficient funds to pay the fines himself?"

"I believe so. I have accepted his resignation as a Hogwarts Professor."

"What will he do? He is a very unpleasant man." She did not like the man, and his treatment of her niece was reprehensible.

"Would you rather have him on our side working against Voldemort, or on Tom's side working against us?"

"The former of course. Perhaps I could contact a colleague in potions research at St. Mungos. Perhaps he could participate in a work-release program. That of course is predicated on decisions from Mr. Potter and the Grangers. Do not pressure them Dumbledore. I will visit them after I have spoken with Mr. Potter. Have you set trial arrangements for the four?"

Dumbledore replied, "I have contacted the other Wizengamot heads. We have decided on one trial for the four, and common sentencing should they be found guilty. I will ask Harry, the Grangers and Dr. Turnbull to be available on Monday 29 July at 8 AM. Should that prove workable for them, I will contact you immediately."

“I will call the Grangers when I have spoken with Harry. I won’t be ready to file charges against Snape until next Monday or Tuesday, so I recommend scheduling a hearing on the morning of the first of August.” She got up. “Thank you for your time Professor.”

“Have a good afternoon, Director.” Dumbledore left to have dinner with Professor Chang.

On Thursday morning at 9:00 AM, Harry found himself once again outside the office of the Director of Magical Law Enforcement. This time, he wasn't nervous.

"Mr. Potter is here to see you Director."

"Thank you Percy. Show him in. That will be all. Please close the door."

"Mr. Potter, please come in."

"Good morning, Director Bones."

"I asked you to come here today for two reasons. First, Mundungus Fletcher left a copy of his memory of the attack with me. He couldn't identify the attacker. I was hoping that you could."

She showed him Fletcher's memory in her Solicitor's pensive. Mundungus had just bent over to pick up a case of cognac and turned around. There was Peter Pettigrew pointing a wand at Mundungus. "Avada Kedavra." He turned to walk off as the curse hit the case, apparently not knowing or caring if he had been successful.

"I've met him several times. That definitely was Peter Pettigrew. Notice his hand."

They looked at the memory a second time. They did and Harry commented that Pettigrew's hand was metal and that the wand he used was very similar to the one found in the back garden. He offered to show her his memory of the attack. Amelia mentioned that he was under no obligation to do so if he didn't want to.

He replied, "I don't mind."

He went through the memory with her, narrating. "Notice that he only had one wand in his hand when I stunned him...Watch him when Hermione and I stand up to stun Draco. There is still one wand on the ground... Now watch when we stand up the third time, there's the extra wand."

Amelia thanked Harry and asked if he would like coffee or tea. He accepted. She poured them both a tea, handed him his, and sat down again. "Harry based on what you have told and shown me, there would be justification to believe that the third wand belonged to Peter Pettigrew, and almost certainly did not belong to Severus Snape. Would you agree?"

"Yes ma'am." He sat for a moment and continued. "A different question is that of intent. Professor Dumbledore has tried to lead me to the conclusion that Severus was not involved in the attack, and is virtually blameless."

Bones replied, "I have no evidence of that."

"Director Bones, if you are in fact are asking my opinion, I would point to the fact that Snape was there. He was there the same as Voldemort's other soldiers. For some it may have been their first battle, not so for others. Draco would have killed Hermione given the chance. They came to Dan and Emma's home with one thing in mind – to torture and kill Hermione and then her parents. The fact that several others and I were there to stop them does not change their intent. I believe that I would have been within the terms of the license that you gave me to cast a Reducto or Percutto spell at Snape, based on the belief that they had threatened our lives. If he had died, so be it. He chose to go to a battle. When I faced him, he wasn't in the process of stunning Malfoy. I'm sorry but I do not agree with Professor Dumbledore on this. I'm not trying to change your viewpoint on this Director Bones, only explain mine."

Amelia looked at Harry for a moment, slightly surprised that he wasn't parroting Dumbledore's position. "Thank you for your candidness, Mr. Potter. I think you needed to say what you had to say, even if only to me. I don't disagree with you. If you choose to testify against Severus Snape, he will most likely go to Azkaban, and it is doubtful that anything that anyone else might say would change that outcome. No one would ever blame you. No one would dispute your word. It would be a fair sentence. If you choose not to testify against him, and get the Grangers to agree, he will almost certainly go to a muggle prison for up to ten years based on the evidence. If he goes there, it is possible that he could enter a work release program, and perform a

useful wizarding community service during part of the day, then be returned to his cell each evening. You do not need to give me your decision now, but once you do, it will be considered final. I would like to know your decision by noon tomorrow if possible.

She continued, "Harry, I want you to remember that neither you, Hermione, her parents, nor their friend did anything wrong to deserve to be attacked. You defended yourselves the best that you knew how, and due to your efforts, your friends are alive. Snape knew what he was doing was wrong. It is likely that he has at least attended raids in the past, and never came here to confess his crimes. The only difference this time was that he was caught. You did well, and I thank you."

Harry nodded, and said that he would talk it over with the Grangers that evening.

Harry purchased a few more robes at Madam Malkin's for his new position. He had not told anyone about it yet. Remus and Hermione met up with Harry at noon at the Leaky Cauldron, and had lunch in Muggle London. They asked Remus to take them to Grimmauld place, so they could get some books from their library. Within 35 minutes they were there.

The library was fantastic for it's size. There were 1,500 or so volumes in it, but not many ordinary books – mostly first editions, rare books, hand written manuscripts, some darker books than what would be found on the shelves at Hogwarts , largely on charms, transfiguration, potions, and fighting techniques. Harry and Hermione both thought that at least two thirds of the books would be useful. Hermione commented that she had seen very few of these books in Flourish and Blotts. Harry helped his girlfriend down from the library ladder, and gave her a hug. The Black Library truly was the jewel of the estate.

"So Romeo, how was your visit with Professor McGonagall yesterday?" Hermione asked, when Harry had finished "helping her down" from the ladder.

“You’ll never believe it,” Harry said with a wicked glint in his eyes.

“What happened?”

“They offered me a teaching assistant position, teaching the practical portion of DADA!”

“I do believe it. That’s fantastic!!!” She hugged him again. “Will you have enough time for your other classes?”

“They want me to take some different classes – Defense against Voldemort, Healing – Auror prep sorts of things. What classes are you signing up for?”

“I want to take Arithmancy, Runes, Potions, Transfiguration, DADA, Astronomy, and Healing.”

Harry asked, “Have you ever thought about what you would like to do after school?”

“I think more schooling, and either a position in healing, research, or teaching. I don’t think I would be comfortable being an Auror.”

“Have you talked about Wizarding careers with your parents?”

She replied looking Harry in the eyes, “In general terms. They can equate a healer with being a Doctor, potions with chemist, that sort of thing.” She knew that Harry was missing having a mum and dad of his own right now. “What does Ron talk about doing?”

“What else? Being an Auror or playing Quidditch with the Chudley Cannons.”

“What about you Harry?” She held both of his hands on her knees.

“I want to stay alive to graduate, enjoy my days and grow old with the right someone. The world needs a few more little Potters, and I need to kill Voldemort before that could happen. I think I could make a

difference at Hogwarts. I'll need a lot of training and a lot of luck to get there."

"Let's get started." They searched through the library and placed about a hundred volumes in five boxes that Remus had conjured. He had left them be while he checked on one of the rooms in the cellar.

They started taking the boxes out to the car. As Harry went in for the last box, Remus told Hermione that Tim from the Black Dog would be happy to let out the pub for an evening.

Harry had locked the door and put the last box in the boot of the car. They drove Hermione back to her home, parked the car, and carried the boxes past the stairway door and closed the door. Then Harry levitated the boxes up the stairs, and put the books on his nearly empty bookshelves. Remus commented that they had picked up a lot of books to be considered "extra summer reading."

As usual, Harry made the dinner, and Remus did the dishes. Harry hadn't mentioned Dumbledore's offer yet.

Harry had invited Hermione and the Grangers to come over for desert that night. Harry had made an apple pie. They arrived at seven. Harry showed them around for a few minutes thanking Emma and Hermione again for helping him with the furniture selections and arrangements.

They sat down to eat their desert, knowing that there was "business" to discuss. Harry started, "I met with Director Bones this morning. I identified the man who stunned Kingsley and tried kill Mundungus. It was Peter Pettigrew, the man who helped kill my parents. Four of the Death Eaters have been charged, and will go to trial on Monday the twenty ninth of July. Severus Snape will probably go either to Azkaban or a regular prison, depending on our preference. Director Bones asked me to decide, and let her know by tomorrow noon. I was hoping that we could all talk about it, if you don't mind."

Dan spoke first. "What is your opinion Harry?"

“I have my opinion, and I will share it with you, but I was hoping to hear the other viewpoints first.”

Emma spoke next, “What does the evidence that Peter threw his wand in the back garden really mean? Snape was already down. The man had come to a fight. He was bested in the first round, and now he wants everyone to believe that he never even intended to fire a shot. Harry, plainly spoken, that is a load of crap. He has been a spy for your entire life. He may not personally have murdered or tortured too many people, but if he was there, he let it happen. In my opinion, that makes him a willing accomplice.”

She continued, “Do you think that they were expecting to find you and your watchers at our house? Of course not. They were expecting to find a young helpless witch out sunbathing in the back garden with her wand on her nightstand, and her defenseless parents sitting in the kitchen having tea. They wanted people to read in the Prophet about how a young witch that they don’t feel was good enough to join their little club was put in her place. What do you suppose that “Master Spy Severus Snape” would have reported? “Sorry Professor, young Draco was unstoppable. There was nothing that I could do Headmaster.” Harry, I’m not asking you to adopt my viewpoint, simply because it is mine. All that I am asking is that you don’t adopt Dumbledore’s position simply because it’s his. Make up your own mind.”

She continued, “I had made my demands to Dumbledore – ten years in the prison of his choice. They could take five years off if Bellatrix is killed or sent back to prison and neither of you are hurt in the process. They could take another five years if that monster Voldemort is killed, and neither of you are hurt.”

Hermione spoke next. “I’m not saying that he doesn’t deserve it, but ten years in Azkaban would be a long time.”

Remus replied, “Sirius did twelve for a crime that he didn’t even commit.”

Hermione asked, “What would he do if they sent him to another prison?”

Harry said, "They might place him in a work release program where he could do community service such as potions research during the day and go to prison the rest of the time. Perhaps he could find a treatment for the Longbottoms."

Dan agreed that Snape wouldn't be doing much good in Azkaban.

Harry explained a bit about what he knew of Azkaban and dementors for the Granger's benefit. None of the Grangers wanted Snape subjected to that level of punishment.

Harry continued, "It is my opinion that he should spend time in the work release program, initially spending his time trying to develop potions that would treat the effects of the Cruciatus curse, which Voldemort's Death Eaters frequently use to torture people. I think that the time that he is asked to serve should not be related to someone's success defeating Bellatrix or Voldemort."

They all agreed, and decided to ask the court to direct him to spend his time researching and developing a treatment for the Cruciatus curse and other "long-term" wizarding conditions. Harry didn't think that Hermione had ever quite mentioned that "charming Mr. Lupin" was a werewolf.

Harry agreed to owl his reply to Director Bones in the morning.

The Grangers left about ten. Remus went to the icebox and brought back four very cold butterbeers, and the rest of the pie.

"So what's on your mind Harry? No one brings home a hundred books for light reading."

"I accepted a part time teaching position for the fall. A big part of me is really excited, another part is scared witless, and a little part feels like I have been talked out of the last remaining bits of my childhood."

"So what do you like about the idea?"

"A lot of things really. I will be teaching with Mad-Eye and someone else. I think the students will really have the opportunity to improve their skills. Dumbledore is changing my own class schedule to more of an Auror prep sort of thing."

"That's what I thought. Did you find the books that you will need for your own use?"

"I hope so. To be honest, I've gotten by in the past because I've had help, I think on my feet pretty well, and I have pretty good reflexes."

"So you will need to learn to substitute technique and knowledge of more spells for always having help. You were pretty much on your own last weekend, and you were successful."

"Maybe. To be honest, they weren't that good. Lucius, Rookwood, and Bellatrix were a lot better. When I was with the Grangers, on Sunday, we were fighting from a good defensive position. Malfoy could have set the house on fire and burned us out. I don't think they were on their game plan. Crabbe and Goyle were late at the front door. Using a Reducto spell to shatter the window wasn't a great idea, as it allowed us an open portal to fight back from. Malfoy and Goyle's Dad had no cover to hide behind. Their whole plan was based on there being two or three more or less defenseless people home. Malfoy is lucky that Dan Granger didn't shoot him with his shotgun."

"Harry those are the areas that you are amazingly good at - developing quick tactics, good strategy, and fast response. Your first tactic was to get Mrs. Granger out of the line of fire, and calling the right person for help. You quickly disabled one of the attackers, and got back under cover. I'd like to believe that I would have done half as well as you did."

Harry nodded. "Then Malfoy made another stupid blunder, he opened up a second window that we could fight back from. He should have tried to get under cover and revive his downed partner. My only mistake was not getting Hermione to aim to the left while I aimed to the right. We could have got both of them at once."

"True, but you made certain that you did get one of them."

“We were under cover when Crabbe and Goyle broke through the front door. Diane and Emma just happened to have those wine bottles that turned out to be good things to try to throw fifteen feet. If they had both hit Crabbe, I think he would be buried by now. I was able to hit Goyle with a stunner.”

“Harry, the most important lesson to teach your students is to fight back. Most victims freeze up, and just wait to get hit. What you can learn yourself is more technique. You had trouble in the Ministry, not because you couldn’t get the attackers down, rather you lacked the tools to keep them down. I’m not supposed to know this, but you are one of only two living people who have ever hit Bellatrix with a spell. At the second task of the tri-wizard, you and Fleur both knew how to defeat a Grindylow, but you did it. She got stuck.”

He continued, “When do you want to meet with Moody? You need to assign appropriate books for the different years. Don’t let May-Eye get carried away, and scare the younger kids. He may be the named professor to satisfy the board of governors, but it’s your class. Are you having double classes to fit everyone in, or doing the practicals alternating with the theory classes in different classrooms? You could schedule something like this:

M1A, 1B, 2A

T2B, 3A, 3B

W4A, 4B, 5A

TH5B, 6A, 6B

F7A, 7B, Staff Meeting

Remus continued, “The first 45 minutes of the class will contain the theory, your hour will have the practices reinforcing what they are learning. Most of the homework will come from the theory side, so you won’t have to grade stacks of essays if you don’t want. You still could run the extra practice sessions one or two nights a week for the older kids.”

“Remus, you seem to have given this a lot of thought.”

“Dumbledore asked me to help Moody one day a week. Moody isn't too fond of dark creatures, and I wanted an excuse to stop by and see you.”

“Cheers.” They both laughed together and finished their bottles.

“Seriously Harry, a lot of people have offered to tutor you on different topics.”

Harry laughed. “What? Assassination 101?”

“No, to learn what you need in order to stay alive, kick Voldemort in the arse, grow old, get married, manage your money, and raise lots of little bushy haired Potters. All the while with Great Uncle Lupin as their babysitter.”

“Seriously, thanks Remus.”

“My pleasure. Good night Harry.”

“Good night, great uncle Lupin. Wait till Hermione hears that one. She'll ... Never mind. Good night.”

On Friday afternoon Hermione was so excited. Remus had gotten the Black Dog pub for the entire day. She could invite as many people as she wanted to help celebrate the birthday of her boyfriend. Poor Harry. He had mentioned that the first time that anyone had even acknowledged his birthday was Hagrid when he had turned eleven. She would fix that. She could invite anyone from the Minister of Magic to famous Quidditch players and they would come, but Hermione realized that Harry didn't want to spend time with celebrities who would come to be seen with the boy-who-lived. She decided to limit the list to those who liked Harry, just for being Harry. The current or former members of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, the DA, some of the teachers, a few Aurors, the Weasleys, her parents, and Diane

largely defined that group. At Harry's suggestion, she also invited Blaise Zabini. Hermione did not know him well, but a request was a request. She also remembered to invite Arabella Figg – Harry's old neighbor friend who lived by the Dursleys. In total, she had invited about 60 people.

Dear ,

You are invited to enjoy a fantastic day celebrating Harry Potter's 16th birthday on 31 July. We are having a celebration at the Black Dog pub, Crawley, West Sussex.

The fun will start at 10:00 AM and go into the night. Dress as you wish. The Black Dog is a muggle pub near my parent's home. There is no floo service. Please RSVP, and let me know if you need transportation. Professor Dumbledore will provide you with a portkey if you need one. Harry has requested that you not bring a gift – just yourself and a handshake or hug.

RSVP to Hermione Granger

Remus was in charge of the food, and the arrangements with the pub. Hermione sent the stack of invitations to Dobby who with Winky's help had them delivered in a few minutes. She asked Colin Creevey to bring his camera and take a few photos. She decided to invite two more people, Amelia Bones and Rita Skeeter. Hedwig was used to deliver those two invitations. Harry seemed to be trying to get to know Amelia Bones better, and Rita had handled the coverage very fairly. She had also kept Severus out of the paper when Harry had asked her to.

On Saturday Remus was having fun answering Harry's cell phone before he could get to it. "Of course you can come over and look at the books. Harry is just sitting here watching DVDs. He needs something useful to do, and someone charming to do it with. He said that your parents were welcome to come for dinner if they wanted too."

“So much for watching The Predator,” muttered Harry. “I’ll make Pizza, you straighten the place up.”

Remus waved his wand once, sending everything back to its place. “Sounds good with me, he said. “I’d like half pepperoni and half green olive. Hermione’s parents like veggie or cheese.”

They had another great night together.

On Sunday morning, Dumbledore went to the holding cells to see how the young Malfoy brat was holding up. “Good Morning Draco. How are you?” Dumbledore surveyed the boy, and mentally reduced his estimate of Draco’s life expectancy in Azkaban from six to four months.

“OK Professor.”

“Can you give me any specifics on operations that are being planned, who the targets might be, or when they might be taking place?”

“I don’t know Professor. Bellatrix was overseeing the training raids, approving targets, and teams. I really only know the specifics of the raid that I had planned against the Grangers.”

“Who would have likely made the selections on the other raids?”

“Umbridge probably would have for the raid that she was working on. Travis might for the other. I don’t know him well.”

“Draco, did you select the Grangers for personal or tactical reasons?”

“Both, I suppose. I also expected that we would have had no trouble winning if those other people hadn’t been there. Bellatrix could have beaten them all, if she hadn’t been hit by a lucky shot.” A glimpse of the old Draco had returned to his face. Dumbledore changed the subject.

"It is unfortunate that that you do not know the specifics, though not unexpected. Do you know where the other wands came from?"

"Some wand maker in the States sent them. There is a box full of them at Headquarters."

"Perhaps you can remember something about how the other operations are being funded?"

"I'm not sure professor. My mother handled the house money."

"I will check back with you in a few weeks. Perhaps you will have remembered something. I have an appointment with a young lady. Enjoy your day, Mr. Malfoy."

Moody had stopped over to Harry's Place that afternoon to finalize the curriculums and course syllabus for each of the years. Moody and Remus had talked briefly with Dumbledore, and they had agreed to let Potter have the first go at it. They sat down at Harry's kitchen table, and Harry pulled out the papers that he had worked up.

"Here is my basis idea. The first and second year practical course would focus on movement, and how to get away. Most of the kids don't know enough spells to be of use yet. The theory part of the class would focus on identification of the bad guys, and cover the legal use of defensive force. Some of it would be the stuff that Umbridge had tried to cover. In practical, we should also cover aiming, proper wand handling." Moody liked that part. They decided to start with large stationary targets, and work their way up to smaller moving targets like balloons on a breezy day.

Harry continued, "Third year would cover defense against various dark creatures. The theory piece would be an explanation of the various creatures, the practical would cover avoiding them to begin with, getting away from them, and if needed how to fight them."

"Fourth and fifth year would focus on defensive techniques, creating shields, using natural cover, creating cover, and creating stronger

shields. The practical piece would be using the various shields that were learned, and cover how to defend against a single then multiple threats, and getting help. We also would cover first aid, and how to stay alive for fifteen minutes. The Patronus charm will be introduced as soon as the class is ready.”

He continued, “Sixth and seventh year would focus on fighting back, using stunners and other legal magical or nonmagical means of disabling an attacker. The practical piece would start with the attack techniques and conclude with the application of everything that has been learned over the years.”

Harry concluded, “All classes would have a conditioning unit covering movement, tumbling, falling down without getting hurt, stamina, and being able to run a mile. The DA group would be a chance to review what has been covered, improve technique, strengthen spells, dueling and street fighting.”

Moody was really impressed with the thought and planning that Harry had put into the course syllabuses. He had similar ideas several years ago, but had never been able to implement them.

Harry continued, “The books that I would like to use for the different years include:

1-2 The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self Protection - Trimble

A Guide to Dark Creatures and How to Live With Them – Firenze

Defending Yourself: A Layman’s Guide – Moody

Fighting Back: A Guide for Staying Alive – Moody

“I was hoping that you both could help suggest another three or four books for the recommended sixth and seventh year NEWT class work.”

“Strengthening Your Spell work is a good read. The older students would get a lot out of it,” suggested Remus. “You Can’t Miss Fast

Enough to Catch up is another good guide for someone that likes to read about technique. Moody, do you have another pick?"

"I like Fighting Dirty against Dirty Fighters, but I wrote it, so maybe we shouldn't use it."

"I read that a few days ago. I really liked it," Harry added. "Moony, what do you think?"

Remus smiled at the reference to the past. "To be honest, I wish that I had come up with as good of a plan myself. Harry for the second year of an age group, are you planning on a continuation of the topics, or a new set of topics?"

"An additional set of topics, I think, but I haven't completely thought that part through yet."

Moody growled, "OK Potter, write it up. Remus and I will sign it, and you can send it in. McGonagall will help you with that part."

He continued, "On a different subject, Remus, Tonks and I want to give you some practice with multiple opponents today. We will start on one of your first year topics – evasion. I'll portkey us to the little forest a mile on the other side of Hogsmede. Tonks is downstairs, go collect her please."

Harry found her sitting at a table having a half-pint. She had on a form fitting top, and a pair of jeans that looked very friendly on her. "Hiya Tonks. You look cracking today."

She smiled. "Thank you Mr. Potter. Miss Granger's selections look great on you too. How are you Harry? Have a seat." She ordered him a pint. "They'll be up there another ten minutes solving the world's issues. We haven't talked in a while. Are you and Hermione taking good care of each other?"

"I think we are really good for each other. We know each other really well, and both like the person that we know."

"That is very well stated Harry. You both are lucky to have found each other."

"And how about you Miss Tonks? Is there a friend in your life?"

"True friends are hard to find when you look like someone else every day. I want to find some guy who is interested in me, not fulfilling a variety of fantasies."

"I understand about finding people who can learn to see past the image, and know the real you. They are rare. If you find one, hold on tight."

"Thanks loverboy. You are a good friend. We'd better get going." They walked upstairs and portkeyed to the location that Moody had set up.

Moody explained the object of the lesson. "Potter, do you see that pile of rocks about a half mile away?" Harry looked and nodded. "I want you to get to it from here without being stunned by either Tonks or Lupin. Give them a few minutes to get set up. You have to walk there, no apparating or flying. You have 60 minutes to get there. If you lose, I have to buy dinner. If you get past them, they buy dinner. Don't let me down. Use stealth and distraction. Get going. I will be watching you."

Harry didn't know how to turn himself invisible, so he disillusioned himself. He picked up a handful of small rocks to use as distractions. He started out quietly moving from tree to tree then stopped after about 100 yards. He looked at the possible ways that he might get there, and tried to find hiding spots where Remus or Tonks might be. He decided to set fire to a clump of sticks that he had soaked to create a lot of smoke. Moving about 50 yards to the left of the pile, he found a spot where he was certain that he would not be seen and whispered "Inflambre." The pile of sticks started smoking. Sitting very still, he saw Lupin coming near it from the opposite side of where he was. Harry started creeping forward another hundred yards and stopped. He was almost impossible to see when he wasn't moving. To the front and left of the pile there was a large puddle. It would be difficult to get through it without someone seeing the movement if

they were looking. The area in front and to the right was tall grass. If Harry was really stealthy he might get through, but it was also the obvious choice. Harry had not seen Tonks, but believed that she would be hiding near there waiting for him. Harry decided to go around the puddles on the far side, and make a dash for it if he was discovered. Looking behind him, he searched again for Lupin. Harry decided to try the fire diversion a second time using two locations at once. He transfigured a few sticks into a larger pile, soaked it, and crept 30 yards to the left to make another pile. He ignited the first pile, and had just finished lighting the second pile when he saw a stunner fly a few yards to his right.

"I saw that Potter," yelled Tonks. Harry now had an idea of where she was. Then again, she had an idea where he was. The two fires did make a fair amount of smoke, and Harry started creeping to the left again. He got around the puddles without incident, and decided to go to the rocks from behind. Meanwhile Lupin had spotted his trail and was moving towards him from the back. When Harry was about 50 yards from the rocks, Lupin aimed and cast his spell. Harry saw it coming and ducked out of the way. Harry took off in a sprint. Lupin had fired twice in the five or six seconds and Tonks once, but from quite a distance. They both missed, and Harry made it to the pile of rocks.

Moody apparated to the spot. "Well done Potter. You didn't use a lot of magic. Mostly you just crept around and stayed out of sight. Most people can't find the source of one spell cast. You should have quit while you were ahead and not tried the third fire."

Harry nodded.

Moody continued. "You tried a risky move at the end that usually works. Most people can't hit a moving target if they are any distance away. Then again, if you do get hit, you're done."

Harry nodded again. "I learned that lesson two years ago against Voldemort and about thirty Death Eaters. You'd be amazed how fast a motivated person can run, even with a badly injured leg."

“That is a good lesson to know, and a great one to pass along. What are you hungry for Potter? Miss Tonks just offered to buy drinks and Mr. Lupin offered to take us all out for steak dinner.”

“You pick sir. I need to get in early. It’s kind of a busy day tomorrow.”

“You will do fine Potter. Just listen to the questions carefully so you are certain that you understand what is being asked, and answer confidently. Let’s go eat.”

“Thanks, Moody.”

“Cheers, kid.”

Harry’s recollection of the trial of the four Death Eaters could best be described as clinical. The spectators had been seated for an hour when the witnesses and Director Bones filed in. Next the full fifty judges of the Wizengamot took their seats. A minute later the four Death Eaters were led into the rooms. Four chained chairs awaited them. The defendants’ names were announced as they were seated into the chairs. The charges were read four times, once for each defendant. The questions had been scripted. Each witness was asked questions for five to ten minutes. The defendants brought in no independent witnesses. They had no alibis to rely on. Only Narcissa Malfoy had come in support of her son. Malfoy’s school friends were conspicuously absent. There was no cheering or sound other than the occasional flash from Bozo’s camera as the defendants were pronounced guilty. Narcissa wrote a Gringotts draft for the thirteen thousand Galleon fine that the four had been levied. Eight Aurors escorted the four prisoners out of the courtroom. Harry remembered being somewhat surprised that there were no dementors present. The Wizengamot judges got up as one and left from their exit followed by the witnesses. The buzz and rumble of noise from the spectators had finally risen to a level that reached Harry’s ears as he was leaving the courtroom.

No one paid attention to the rat that scurried by the front and back entrance of the Weasley joke shop. They were all listening to the

special announcement on the wizarding wireless stating that four Death Eaters were found guilty, and had each received the maximum sentence.

The Grangers had taken the day off, and invited those that had been there that day out to lunch in muggle London. They went to a little restaurant in Notting Hill and had a very nice, quite lunch. Dan walked around the table and shook each person's hand thanking them for helping to save his family that day. The Aurors in turn thanked Harry, and made a special effort at thanking Hermione. They all laughed when one of the Aurors mentioned that one on the cricket teams was holding tryouts for pitcher, and wondered if Emma might be interested. Deep down, the Aurors knew that they were lucky to even be alive to be eating a fancy lunch with the teenager that they had each sworn to protect, knowing that it had been he who had in fact had protected them.

Harry and Remus got home about four and decided to have a pint in the pub. The Grangers went home to have a quiet dinner. They walked up the stairs, locked the door, and sat in the two overstuffed chairs. Remus spoke first.

"Harry, did your parents have a Will?"

"I don't know. I never asked. Hagrid gave me my Gringotts key when I was eleven. I assumed that was all that was left to me. They were pretty young when they were killed. I don't suppose that they had a lot of money."

"I wouldn't be too sure about that without asking. Do you have a Will?"

"No. Until lately, I never really thought about it."

"What changed?"

"The prophecy."

“Dumbledore told the order the first two lines a year ago. We were told that it involves you. I take it there is more to it, and somehow it directly involves you.”

“Right. In short either I kill him, or he kills me.”

“Shite.”

“That about covers it. So how do I make a Will?”

“They’re easy to make. Your estate is currently relatively simple – some cash and a property. You would want to consider one or more recipients, and an institutional alternate. For example, your friend Remus, and Hogwarts school as an alternate. Just kidding. You don’t need to do it today, but after you think about it, the next time you go to Gringotts, Griphook could help.”

“If my parents had a Will, how could I find out?”

“I would ask Dumbledore unless you have a reason not to. If you want, Griphook could find out for you without anyone hearing about it.”

“He has kept a lot of secrets from me over the years. There is a fine line between not telling someone the truth, and telling them a lie. Many of my conversations with him have involved him deciding how much truth to tell me. If Griphook can find out, I would like to hear it from him.”

“We can go tomorrow if you would like.”

“OK.”

On Tuesday morning, Minerva looked at the latest issue of the Daily Prophet.

Wizengamot Convicts Death eaters

Story by Rita Skeeter

All four Death Eaters charged with the 21 July attempted murder of a West Sussex witch were convicted on all counts. In addition, the underage wizards had their wands snapped. Draco Malfoy (16) Vincent Crabbe (16) Thomas Goyle (42) and Gregory Goyle (16) were each convicted of attempted murder, possession of an unauthorized wand, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and damage to property. The fine totaling 13,000 galleons were paid at the court by Mrs. Lucius Malfoy, Draco's mother. The witnesses speaking against the defense were articulate and consistent in their testimony. The vote convicting the four was 48 – 2. The judges voting for acquittal were Edgewcombe and Umbridge who commented "All of the evidence was circumstantial, and there was no proof presented that any of the defendants had actually purchased the wands that the Aurors claimed to have found by the defendants." None of the other Judges offered comment. This reporter who was on the scene moments after the original attack strongly agrees with the verdict, believes that justice was served, and questions the motives of a Judge who would make such a comment.

Minerva put the paper down and asked, "Albus, have you put some sort of spell on Ms. Skeeter? Her reporting seems to have taken a complete turn-about in the last year."

"No Minerva, I would attribute her change in thinking to conversations that she has had with two young Gryffindors. I am curious to understand how Mrs. Edgewcombe could have heard the same testimony as the other judges and still voted for acquittal."

Remus had made the arrangements with Tim the bartender at the Black Dog for 31 July. Guests would start arriving about ten in the morning, stay for lunch, and dinner. The lunch was set up buffet style. The dinner was served from his menu. Tim would be paid very well for the day, receiving not only a generous gratuity, but also a case of some fabulous wine for his trouble. He was told that some of the guests would be a bit quirky, but not to worry. Everyone would know each other, and they were all friends. All he would remember at the

end of the evening was that there had been some sort of corporate private party function, and that the bill had been taken care of.

Hermione's invitations to everyone said "No gifts" which in the wizarding world simply represented a challenge to bring something clever or unusual. If the wizard in question had been older, or not Harry Potter, he would have received an eclectic assortment of white elephant gifts. As it was, Harry did all right. Harry received T-shirts with the Weird Sisters, Cranberries, U2, Chudley Cannons, and one from the Birmingham football team. Some of them were autographed by the people on the shirts. Several of his school friends gave him framed pictures of themselves and Harry. Neville and his Gran gave Harry a dragon hide vest. Dan and Emma gave Harry a pair of matching motorcycle helmets. They also gave him a magnum of Dom Perignon Champaign, with a note to drive safely, take good care of their daughter and to save the other until he was ready to celebrate having kicked Voldemort in the arse. Dobby and Winky gave Harry a self replenishing case of butterbeer, which was quite a clever gift if you knew where to find one. Hermione gave Harry a really nice looking pair of black metal framed glasses. His old pair had been abused and repaired so many times. He didn't remember even getting them, it was before Hogwarts. He could see much more clearly with the new pair. 'Hermione would be well rewarded for her generosity,' thought Harry, smiling at her.

Lee Jordan gave Harry a firework with a note that Harry should save it to set off for a "really special occasion." The twins gave Harry a box that they called "a sampler", and mentioned that Filch would have a fit if the crate sized container were to "accidentally find it's way into the Gryffindor common room" for dissemination among the students. Harry noticed that there was also a generous supply of order forms inside the box. Ron gave Harry his own wizarding chess set. Moody gave Harry a pro-model foe glass. The Aurors gave Harry a Sirius Black wanted poster, signed by all of the Aurors and Director Bones. It was potentially quite a risky gift, as it easily could have offended Harry, but he decided that it was a part of Sirius's life, and certainly a one of a kind item. He really did like it. Diane gave Harry a black long sleeved shirt, belt, and black Docker pants that she had asked a friend to bring over from the States. Remus had given Harry several sets of athletic training clothes. Harry had the feeling that he would be

using these a lot in the very near future. Last but certainly not least, McGonagall gave Harry a lesson planner. On the front inside cover the inscription read Welcome to Hogwarts, signed by all of the teaching staff.

There were a lot of five-minute conversations during the afternoon, as Harry went from person to person, thanking them for coming. Ron apologized for not saying anything about the loss of Harry's aunt and cousin earlier. "I know you weren't close, but it still stinks."

Molly found Harry, saying, "I'm so worried about you dear. Please come and stay with us."

Harry responded, "Mrs. Weasley, thank you thinking of me. Sirius left me a property and Remus is staying with me for the rest of the summer. I've been spending time at the Grangers. They have been taking good care of me like you always do. I'm very lucky to have friends like you and the Grangers. If it would be all right, I really would like to come over for a few days before school starts."

"Of course dear, come anytime you would like." She nearly smothered him in a hug.

Ginny pulled him away, whispering, "Harry, we miss you so much. Don't grow apart from us. Please." She hugged him really hard, saying, "I hope the six of us can have a great year at Hogwarts, Professor Potter." He looked at her and she winked slyly. "Hermione told me. Don't worry, I won't tell a soul. Just wait until you see the signup sheet requesting private lessons." Harry turned a deeper red than many would have thought humanly possible.

Neville's Grandmother found him next, saying "Harry I want you to keep taking care of Neville as you have. He certainly looks up to you. Thank you. His parents would be so proud of him. He is turning into a nice young man."

"Thank you Mrs. Longbottom. I'm sure that Neville would be more than delighted to hear that from you. I will keep an eye out for him. Don't worry."

Lee Jordan came by. "Hiya Harry."

"How have you been Lee?"

"Great. I'm having a lot of fun working with Gred and Forge. Business has been fantastic so far. I got an invitation to try out as the weekend announcer for the Chudley Cannons. I try out, a week from Friday, calling the first thirty minutes of the game against Puddlemere. Maybe you and Hermione could come to the game for luck? Here are two tickets."

"I'd like that. I'll check with Hermione. I really hope that you get it. You are a great game announcer. Good luck Lee."

Hestia Jones found Harry next, saying, "Harry I didn't get a chance to thank you earlier. I must admit that I am surprised to even be alive. Voldemort's Death Eaters don't leave witnesses, let alone living Aurors. She hugged him, really hard, whispering, "I owe you. Don't hesitate to call in the favor." Harry nodded, and she hugged him again.

Harry went to the bar to get a beverage. Mundungus handed him a pint, saying, "Mr. Potter, it is good to see you again. Happy Birthday. Have you had an opportunity to try out your motorcycle yet? If you haven't I'd be glad to give you a few lessons. I've had a few bikes over the years – none that flew, but I'd be happy to help you with the ground part." Harry thanked him and said that he planned on looking him up the next week.

Tonks grabbed him from behind, tickling him. "Wotcher, Harry! You're looking pretty good from the back in those new trousers that Hermione got you. Cute bum."

Harry smiled at her, giving her a quick visual appraisal. "You look pretty tidy yourself. Miss Tonks. Thanks for coming. It is good to see you." Harry decided that having new glasses was a good thing.

"And you my dear. I'll pick you and Remus up tomorrow at eight. Don't worry. Just tell your story, and answer the questions. Stick to the facts, unless you are asked to give an opinion. You'll do fine.

Moody will pick up the Grangers. Don't stay up too late chatting up all the girls." She hugged him, whispering, "Thanks again for sharing Sirius's money with me Harry. It made a big change in my life, having all of the bills paid. Let me know how I can help you, anytime, anything. Happy birthday."

Tiny Professor Flitwick came over, thanking Harry for inviting him to such a wonderful party. He offered to help Harry with some fighting spells that he might not find in many books. Harry gratefully accepted his offer.

Rita Skeeter had been surprised to receive Hermione's invitation to Harry's birthday party. The bottom of the invitation had the postscript "No business to be conducted. Just come and have a good time." She had been having a good time. She was a very good investigative reporter when she wanted to be. Potter had pointed out the Inquisitorial Squad connection between the three students who had been convicted. They had all been members of the Hogwarts Inquisitorial Squad during Umbridge's short tenure as head of the school. The group led by Malfoy was originally intended to be her private goon squad, acting as eyes and ears as well as unofficial muscle. Potter seemed to be the student rallying point for the light side, and Malfoy was for the dark, forever pressing the 'pureblood' button. The squad had included Umbridge, Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Montague, Warrington, Parkinson, and Bulstrode. If a third of its members were on their way to Azkaban, the others probably weren't at choir practice. She decided to ask what Amelia knew about the others. She also decided to keep Potter out of the discussion if she could. She found Bones and stuck up a conversation. "One of the connections between the three students was an Inquisitorial Squad that Delores Umbridge had set up. According to the students that I talked with, the other members included Bulstrode, Parkinson, Warrington, and Montague. If Voldemort is actively recruiting Death Eaters, they may be candidates. Do you think there could be a connection between the two groups?"

Bones replied, "It's quite possible. Dumbledore mentioned that he had recent suspicions about Umbridge. I'll have them picked up right after Snape's trial for questioning. Are you certain that this is a complete list?"

Skeeter replied, "There may have been others from the other school houses. She had given them little badges to wear. Perhaps not everyone wore theirs. I'll keep my eyes open. Cheers."

About five in the afternoon, Dumbledore arrived. He made his way to greet Harry. "What a splendid gathering you have here Harry. Happy Birthday."

"Thank you Professor. Thank you for coming."

"Have you told many people about your living arrangements yet?"

Harry replied, "No. As far as everyone but you, the Grangers, and Remus knows, this is a muggle pub that is near Hermione's house."

Dumbledore nodded. "Good. That strategy will serve you well, even better next summer when you have passed your apparition test. I have made arrangements at the Ministry. You can take your exam whenever you find yourself ready. The instructors and professors who have each volunteered to individually assist you in your classes will each be contacting you in the next week or two, regarding materials that you should get. As such, you will not be in the standard classes, which may make your teaching relationships quite a bit easier. It may be best if you generally ate at the staff table for dinner and your noontime meal."

He continued, "I wanted to take this occasion to formally invite you to join the Order."

"I would be honored, Professor. Thank you."

"I will have the same conversation with Miss Granger in a minute, so you would be free to talk with her, as usual. I also wanted to talk with you regarding your opinion of the likelihood that more of the current students would have possibly taken the Mark this summer."

Harry thought for a few seconds before answering. "I think you are correct professor. The children of the current Death Eaters, and their

friends are the most likely candidates. I can think of only one other student who may consider such a move, Marietta.”

“Of course, Miss Chang’s rather unhappy friend. I shall talk with Director Bones tomorrow, and leave the matter in her very capable hands. Thank you for your candidness, Harry, and again, Happy Birthday. I’ll stop by next Tuesday morning, and we can go over your schedule for the school year. Dumbledore noted that twice in two days the Edgecombe name had come up.

A few minutes later, Dumbledore found Hermione and asked to speak with her. “Miss Granger, if you have an interest, I would like to offer you an invitation to join the Order of the Phoenix. I assure you that your role in the group would not take you away from your studies. We need people with your extraordinary analytical skills. Please consider my offer carefully, and let me know when you have decided.”

“Professor, I would be honored to join.”

“Thank you Miss Granger. I will have more information for you in a week or so. Go on and enjoy the splendid party that you arranged.”

Hermione found Susan Bones sitting by herself. Hermione sat down by her. “Hi Hermione. It’s good to see you again. Thanks for inviting me today. My summer hasn’t been too great either.”

“Susan, I heard that you had been attacked three weeks ago. I was so glad to hear that you hadn’t been hurt.” Hermione hugged Susan for a moment. Susan did not look good. There were tears in her eyes.

“Hermione, I was so scared. The lessons that Harry had taught just kicked in by themselves and somehow I managed. I am so grateful to him. Auntie told me that you had been attacked too. I wonder if it was the same people. Did you two really capture three Death Eaters on your own? I am so proud of you Hermione. Is Harry going to run the group again? I wish we could get a proper Defense teacher like him for a change.”

“I’m sure that it will be better this term.” Hermione was not going to announce Harry’s new position. They sat in silence for a moment,

and Hermione asked, "Susan, can I introduce you to a friend of my mums? I think you would like her."

Remus saw Luna Lovegood, and went over to say hello. "How nice to see you again Professor Lupin. Ronald says that you are keeping an eye on Harry this summer, now that he moved from his uncle's home. Thank you for that."

Remus had always like Luna. "I'm the one who should be thanking Harry, Luna. Spending time with him has been very good for me. How has your summer been?"

"Wonderful. Father and I went to Sweden to take pictures of crumpled-horn snorkacks. The photos we took don't do them justice, but we had a great time together. Is it true that professor Snape tried to kill Harry and Hermione?"

Remus debated how much to tell her. "I'm not sure, Luna. I wasn't there. There certainly was an attack on the Granger's house. I'm so glad that they weren't badly hurt. Have a nice rest of your holidays Luna. I'd like to see your photos sometime."

Arthur Weasley found Lupin, and said, "Remus, I'm concerned about V, Voldemort's apparent plans to recruit students as Death Eaters. They are a lot more likely to go after other young people and having no experience, innocent people are bound to get hurt."

Remus replied, "Harry had said something very similar to me the other day – They may be ruthless, but they have no military training, and lack proper planning skills."

"You're right about that," said Arthur. "Bellatrix leading a raid would be like a pack of wild dogs, that woman should be put down." Remus ignored the unintended insult. Arthur continued, "The other problem with new recruits is that until they are seen, or caught, we don't have a way to identify them. I suppose that it goes with the saying 'innocent until proven guilty,' but I believe that we need to do something proactively."

"I agree Arthur, finding the right something is the trick."

A minute later, Arthur found Harry, and went to speak with him. "Harry, I was sorry to hear about your aunt and cousin. The news was slow to reach us."

"Thanks, Mr. Weasley."

"I heard about your role defending the attack on the Grangers. Was Snape really lined up to attack them with the other Death Eaters?"

"Yes sir. The cuts on my back are from the glass of the window that he shattered in the first volley."

"Harry, how many other students do you think V, Voldemort may have recruited?"

"I wish I knew. No one seems anxious to check the students who have taken the Mark. Draco had a half dozen or so in his Inquisitorial Squad. They all are of a similar mindset, so I would be surprised if they had too."

Arthur had lost a lot of weight in the last month. His thin red hair looked rumpled from stress. "I suppose that you're right. Harry please stop by for a visit. We miss seeing you in the summer. Please invite Hermione too. You are always welcome in our home."

Harry was grateful for the heartfelt offer. "I will Mr. Weasley. Thank you for coming tonight. We will stop by next week."

Harry made a point of finding Blaise and thanking him for coming. They talked for a few minutes, and Harry made a point of introducing him to the students and a few others. Blaise was pretty serious about his studies, much closer to Hermione in that aspect than Ron. It was Harry's hope that Blaise could be invited into the DA in the fall, and could help persuade some of the younger Slytherins to join also.

Harry had thanked everyone for coming. The food had been great, and it had been wonderful to see so many friends. After the guests had left, Harry thanked Remus and the Grangers again for arranging

the party. "It was the best one that I remember. Thank you all so much."

Dan commented, "After the last trial tomorrow, things can get back to normal." He and Emma left, with instructions that "someone really brave" would need to walk their daughter home later.

Remus sent the teenagers upstairs to look at the gifts. He helped Tim clean up for an hour.

Hermione did get home safely that evening. She wanted to be well rested for the trial of Severus Snape.

The trial for Snape on 1 August was quite different from the one a few days earlier. The reporters from the Prophet, Quibbler, and the Salem Preview weren't there. The full Wizengamot had been replaced by a five-member panel. Dumbledore had excused himself to avoid an appearance of conflict of interest. Hestia testified that Snape stunned her. Harry recapped his testimony from his point of view. Hermione and the Grangers affirmed what Harry had said. Tonks testified that she saw Snape transform from the Polyjuice form of Bellatrix.

Snape offered none of the half-baked excuses and lies that the judges typically heard. He answered their questions, and explained his version of the attack. There was no mention by either the judges, the witnesses, or from Snape regarding his previous activities with the Order.

The judges called a five-minute recess. Harry just wanted it to be over with. Soon the judges returned, and sat down.

"Severus Snape, we have reached our decision. Do you have anything to say on your behalf before we pass judgement?"

Snape sat straight in his chair, his hair managing to stay out of his eyes. "Yes I do. I was wrong. I started with good intentions, and I sincerely apologize. However, apologizing doesn't change the facts. I

was wrong, and am prepared to accept whatever judgement the Wizengamot sees fit to hand out.”

“Well spoken, Mr. Snape. For the crime of possession of an unauthorized wand, the court finds you guilty of one count, and fines you one thousand Galleons.” That was the maximum sentence allowed.

“For the crime of possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, the court finds you guilty and fines you one thousand Galleons.” That was also the maximum sentence.

“For the crime of damage to property, the court finds you guilty and fines you twelve hundred fifty Galleons.” The sentence was ten times the damaged that the Aurors judged to have been caused by the attack.

“For the crime of assault on an Auror, the court finds you guilty, and sentences you to 30 days in prison, allowing time already served to be counted. You are also fined 500 Galleons.” That was the minimum sentence. He easily could have faced an additional year in prison over and above any other judgements.

“For the crime of attempted murder the court finds you guilty, and directs you to serve a term of no less than fifteen years in Azkaban.” That was the maximum sentence, and much more than Severus had expected. The Judge continued, “However the victims have previously appealed your sentence, were you to be found guilty, and begged the court to consider an alternative arrangement. Are you willing to accept it instead?”

Snape felt a wave of relief. Fifteen years in Azkaban was the equivalent of a death sentence. “Yes I am.” There would be no negotiating. He would accept Potter’s sentence sight unseen or die in Azkaban.

“You are directed to serve a sentence of ten years in Rye Hill prison. Each day you will be allowed to work at the potions research center at St. Mungos. You will be required to spend each evening at the prison. In the event that you develop a potion that successfully treats

Frank and Alice Longbottom, your sentence will be reduced to time served. You are also requested to research a permanent treatment for Lychocantrophy. The Sirius Black Victims Relief Fund will pay for any expenses that you may incur. Do you have any questions?"

Snape could not believe his fortune. Dumbledore had really come through for him convincing the Potter brat to an alternative sentence. "No sir. Thank you. Again, I am sorry."

"Again at the request of the victims, you have been granted 48 hours to take care of your personal business. You will be given escort from Wizengamot Chair Dumbledore and Senior Auror Shackbolt wherever you need to go. Do not try to escape, or your sentence will be doubled. You will report back to the ministry by 9:00 AM on Saturday the third of August. Are there any questions?"

"No sir. Again, thank you."

"You will need to pay the court before Saturday at 9:00 AM. Dismissed."

Dumbledore, Auror Duncan, and Snape left through a side entrance, to go back to Snape's cottage.

Minerva walked up to Harry and Hermione and placed a hand on their shoulders. "Harry, Hermione that was a very generous offer that you made. I'd like to believe that I would be as forgiving, if placed in a similar situation. With someone of Snape's skill working full time on the Longbottom project, they may see a treatment in a year or so."

"Thank you, Professor McGonagall. I think we did the right thing," said Hermione. Harry wished nothing for his friend Neville so much as to give him his parents back.

Director Bones talked with Dan and Emma Granger for a few minutes, before finding Harry. "Well done, Mr. Potter. I wanted to thank you for inviting Susan and myself to your lovely gathering yesterday. I hope that the next time we meet, it is also a social occasion. Thank you for all of your help."

"Thank you Director Bones. If your offer of the books is still open, I would very much like to start reading them. I have plenty of time before school starts. A package could be sent to me at this address." He gave her the address of the Black Dog pub.

"I will see to it today. Enjoy your day Mr. Potter. Auror Tonks, will you please escort Mr. Potter to his next destination."

"Certainly, Director Bones," said Tonks.

"Harry, the Grangers and I have some business at Gringotts. It won't take long. We'll meet you at the joke shop in half an hour," said Remus.

George, Harry, and Tonks started the ten minute walk from the side entrance of the Ministry to the twins' shop. George was kidding Harry that he would be a hero for an entire generation of students that have had or would miss having Snape for a professor. Harry smiled sadly. There were no winners this week, only losers - Mothers who lost sons, and a terrified family who will constantly lock their doors when they never used to.

They were about a block away from the shop when they heard the first explosion. Harry looked and saw seven Death Eaters leaving the front of the shop! One was casting the Dark Mark into the sky as the three started running to the shop.

Harry immediately called with his cellular telephone, "Director Bones office – Percy Weasley speaking."

"Percy, this is Harry. Your brothers' joke shop is under Death Eater attack. Send some Aurors and a medi-witch as soon as you can. Bye."

"Potter, you are authorized to do whatever you can to defend yourself and assist this Auror in the capture of these Death Eaters," yelled Tonks. "You are not authorized to get hurt, so don't."

"Reducto," Harry said, casting a spell at the first Death Eater. It turned out to be Bellatrix. Harry's spell had severed her left arm at the

shoulder! She screeched and apparited away leaving her left arm in the street.

Tonks stunned a Death Eater. Her mask came off as she fell in the street. George hit another. Tonks was hit with a curse and fell. Harry fired Reducto at another Death Eater. This one was about five foot high, and three feet wide. The Death Eater was hit in the thigh, and bleeding badly. The death eater had dropped her very short wand, and was reaching for her spare and fell as George stunned her. The other three Death Eaters apparated away. Harry went back to Tonks, while George went into the shop.

Tonks was badly cut on the side of her head from hitting the ground. Blood was everywhere. Harry had his hand over the cut to slow the bleeding, but he was soaked in her blood. Pop, Pop, Pop, pop, pop, pop – five Aurors and a mediwitch were on the scene. Pop, pop. Two more mediwitches had arrived a few seconds later. Two of the Aurors and one of the mediwitches were looking at Tonks. The others heard George's call, and went into the burning Joke shop. Pop, pop. Two more Aurors were on the scene. Within a minute three people were being carried out. Six little kids were also being herded out. None of the kids looked hurt, though they were obviously scared witless.

“Harry! Harry!” Hermione was running flat out to the scene with Remus and the Grangers trying to catch up.

Some of the Aurors were in the process of putting Anti-Apparition restraints on the three Death Eaters. The woman with the thigh wound attempted to apparate away, but passed out from blood loss before she could.

Harry, Hermione, and the Grangers were immediately portkeyed off the scene by four more Aurors, back to the Ministry. Harry was rushed back into Director Bone's private office still wearing his robe soaked and dripping Tonk's blood. She asked, “Are you hurt? What happened, Harry?”

He described the events as best he remembered them starting with Tonks asking for his help, ending with being portkeyed to her office. Amelia listened carefully and took a few notes.

After about five minutes an aid walked in the office, and whispered something to Director Bones. She rubbed her eyes and folded her hands over her nose. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this Harry. Your friend from school was killed. Auror Straighthand will be here in a few minutes with the details."

End Part II

Thursday - 1 August – 11:00 AM – Ministry of Magic - London

An aid walked in the office, and whispered something to Director Bones. She rubbed her eyes and folded her hands over her nose. “I’m sorry to have to tell you this Harry. Your friend from school was killed. Auror Nick Straighthand will be here in a few minutes with the details. I’ll be back in a half hour”

End Part II

Part III – Living with Death

Thursday - 1 August – 11:10 AM – Diagon Alley

POP,POP,POP,POP,POP,POP. Six more medi-witches and wizards arrived at the scene. Two went to Tonks, one to George, one to Fred, one to Lee, and one to Ron. Two of the ones who had arrived earlier were working on Umbridge, the other was looking at the little kids. Ron was huddled under a blanket shaking badly.

Remus apparated to the burrow. He found Molly and Ginny visiting while feeding the gnomes in the back garden. Molly smiled for a moment, then looked into Lupin’s sad overly gray eyes, and the smile vanished from her face.

“What’s wrong Remus?”

“Molly, there’s been an attack at the joke shop a few moments ago. There are injuries. I thought you should know. I’m very sorry.” Molly told Ginny to stay put, knowing that in the same circumstances, she wouldn’t herself. She and Remus apparated outside the joke shop.

When they got to Diagon Alley, Molly’s fears from the boggart at Grimmauld place a year ago were realized. Lying in the ground were nearly half of her children. Ron, George and Fred were under Mediwizard blankets being attended to. Next to them, two bodies were covered under similar blankets. A few steps away an arm was on the ground with a yellow circle surrounding it. Rita and Bozo were on the scene, taking notes and snapping photographs. Molly felt weak and got sick. A minute later Ginny arrived. She had used the floo to get to the Leaky Cauldron. She saw the two Death Eaters in

their anti-apparation manacles, walked up to them, and kicked the closest one in the side as hard as she could. Shacklebolt let her finish, walked up to her and picked her up before she could similarly injure the other one. He half wished that he had not seen her, and she had had her way with them for five minutes before anyone had noticed. He carried her across the street, smiled at her, and asked her to please behave.

Tonks was unconscious and was being port keyed along with the two mediwitches that had been attending to her. At that moment, Dumbledore apparated to the scene as did Amelia Bones. He was talking with Shacklebolt for a few seconds when another explosion rocked the building. Glass and bricks flew, badly injuring the two mediwitches that had previously been looking at Umbridge. A second Dark Mark rose from the back of the building. Ginny realized that her arm was bleeding. She showed it to Molly, who cast a healing charm on it. Dumbledore took a good look around the area. Who or what he was looking for wasn't immediately obvious. He walked over to the severed arm lying on the street, and noticed another of the identical wands next to it. He motioned over to Rita and Bozo to come over and photograph it. By now several hundred gawkers had gathered. Kingsley wanted to preserve as much of the evidence as he could. He pointed his wand to his throat calling Sonorus. "Everyone please take a few steps back. If you witnessed the first explosion, please come forward. Everyone else please move back." The only people who came forward were the mother of one of the kids who had been in the store and Dennis Creevey.

Dumbledore arrived at about the same time as Bones, found Lupin and asked him if he had witnessed the attack.

"Only the end professor. Harry and Tonks had subdued the attackers by the time I arrived here following Hermione and her parents. Tonks was hurt pretty badly. Harry was holding her trying to slow the bleeding until help arrived. Three or four Aurors port keyed Harry and the Grangers away. Straiighthand was one of them. He and two of the Aurors immediately returned back here."

"Did you see who this arm belonged to?"

“No the first thing that I noticed was two or three Death Eaters apparating away. Dumbledore and Lupin walked up to the Death Eaters – Marietta Edgecombe and Carl Warrington. He looked under the blankets. Under the first one was the gray face of Delores Umbridge, under the second was Lee Jordan, and his beautiful shoulder length dreadlocks. Dumbledore had always liked Lee, fondly remembering his colorful tussles with Minerva while announcing the Quidditch matches.

By now the mediwitches had port keyed Ron, Fred, George, Tonks, and the other injured. Dumbledore talked for a minute with the six small children that had been in the building. Kingsley was getting a preliminary statement from Mrs. Anna Smith, the mother of one of the students.

Amelia surveyed the mess. The second blast had injured several others who had been nearby. She was certain that anyone who had been inside would have been killed.

Dumbledore walked over to her. “Hello Amelia. One of the Death Eaters who had apparated away was wounded quite badly. I don’t think she would have been going to St. Mungo’s. I believe that Voldemort lacks a sufficient supply of blood restorative potions to treat his wounded, or has the time to brew it himself. I expect that he will be sending some people to Woodsworth Apothecary in Knockturn Alley momentarily to procure some. Perhaps you might consider sending some Aurors to head them off.”

“An excellent idea Dumbledore. MacDonell, Straighthand, and Jones, go to Woodsworth immediately. Stop anyone attempting to buy blood restoratives. Expect trouble. Be very careful.” It would be another long day for her.

Same time – Riddle Manor

Meanwhile at little Hangleton, Flint, Montague, and Bulstrode apparated back only to find Voldemort and six Death Eaters standing over the unconscious form of Bellatrix. Voldemort had cauterized the wound to keep her alive, but doing so virtually eliminated the possibility of fitting a replacement for her severed arm. He levitated

her inside and told one of the Death Eaters to bring up all of the blood replacement potion from the laboratory. Voldemort wondered what the hell Snape had gotten himself imprisoned for. He really needed his skills right at the moment. Bella was slipping away. He administered as much as he had on hand. It was not enough. He said "Woodson, bring Nott's son Theodore along to Knockturn Alley and get six or seven more doses. He won't be recognized, but stay with him." He told Bulstrode, Montague and Flint to go home and prepare their alibis. "You did not fail me today. It was bad luck that Bella was hit with something other than the usual Auror stunner." He looked at her. She had lost most of her blood. Unless those idiots came back within a few minutes she would not survive. Fortunately she was unconscious, and not in pain.

Five minutes later Chuck Woodson returned.

"Where is the potion?"

"I did not get it, my lord. The Aurors were waiting for us at Woodworth's. Theodore Nott was taken."

"Crucio. You idiot. You failed me for the last time. Avada Kedavra. You idiot." Voldemort started kicking the dead man. A minute later, Bellatrix began convulsing badly. "Avada Kedavra." The shaking stopped. "I'm sorry Bella. I failed you." He looked at her for a moment and said, "Come Wormtail. We have business on Skye Island. You others, return home until I summon you."

Fifteen minutes later Shacklebolt, Snape and Jones found an empty house, two dead bodies, and a box with sixty five wands. Jones port keyed back to the Ministry Morgue with Woodson and Bellatrix. She brought the box of wands up to Director Bones' office, and filed her report.

Fifteen minutes earlier, Amelia had returned to the Ministry. She apologized to Potter and the Grangers for keeping them waiting so long. She asked Harry to come back the next day at a time that would be convenient for him for some follow-up questions. She had Percy get Harry some temporary robes while he cleaned the blood off of his

robes. A few minutes later he came back. Harry went to the Men's room and dressed. Lupin gathered them up and they drove home.

Aurors Nick Straighthand, Bob Amos and John Thomas were walking through the ruins of the building. The blast originated from a package that Bulstrode had set on the floor next to the sales counter of the shop. It had contained several pounds of muggle military C4 explosive, a timed detonating device and fifteen pounds of steel balls, essentially an extra large claymore mine, designed to kill people, not simply destroy property. A fire must have started in the original scuffle, and ignited some of the fireworks that the Weasleys sold in their store.

An hour later Dumbledore appeared at the ruin. The Aurors had finished their investigation, and were talking outside. They had taken all of their photographs and were ready to leave the scene and let the wrecking crew begin their work the next day.

Dumbledore could repair the building, but its contents were lost. He concentrated on his memory of the building and its layout for several minutes. Holding both arms out at their sides, he stepped clock ways three times, and softly spoke an incantation. A few seconds later, the building began reassembling itself, like a hurricane being played backwards. The bricks, glass, mortar and wood all remembered their place. He left the inside of the newly rebuilt building alone – Molly, Arthur, Ginny, and Bill would see to it.

Straighthand marveled at what he had just witnessed. He had been a student at Hogwarts, graduating ten years earlier. He knew Dumbledore was an exceptionally skilled wizard, but had never seen anything like that in his life. He would forever think his own ability at transfiguration feeble after having witnessed that event. In most cases after a building is destroyed, the wreckage is vanished, and the building is rebuilt from scratch. In minor cases like the attack at the residence in Crawley two weeks ago, a repair crew was dispatched, and the pieces mended one at a time. To see a building spontaneously rebuild itself was a marvel even in the magical world.

Straighthand walked up to Dumbledore who had sat down for a few minutes to rest. Dumbledore noticed him, and asked, "Good evening, Nick. After examining the building, what are your conclusions?"

“Professor, we found dozens of these round steel marbles. They don’t look like they belong in a joke shop.”

“You are correct Nick. They are muggle made objects, called ball bearings. Their normal use is to aide in muggle automobile manufacturing. One of the Death Eaters had perverted their purpose to create a bomb designed to kill people. How many people were in the building when it was attacked?”

“At least nine sir. We have identified six students and one of their mothers who was waiting outside. Two of the Weasley brothers and the Jordan boy were working at the time. The other Weasley twin was in the firefight with the Death Eaters, and came into the building as it finished. He was the one that we followed into the building. Inside we found the Jordan boy. The one with the dreadlocks had been killed with a curse. The older Weasley, Fred was badly injured with shoulder damage. We took the little kids out of the store and found the last Weasley brother curled up in shock. About five minutes after we got everyone out the bomb went off and blew the building. Two of the mediwitches were injured in the blast.”

“Very insightful Nick. Save the ball bearings. They are part of your evidence. What else did you find?”

“Each of the Death Eaters had a second wand, identical to the ones from the last attack. The arm that was found belonged to a woman. We estimate her age between 35 and 40. The wound must have been massive. The spell that had severed the arm must have hit several inches below the collar bone. The other Death Eater was identified as Delores Umbridge. She had been similarly hit in the left hip bone, and died a few minutes later from blood loss. I am surprised that neither woman had thought to use a shield charm. We transported the two prisoners to the holding cell, Umbridge to the morgue, and the evidence to the holding room. I need to fill out my reports now. You called these ball bearings, correct?”

“Yes Nick. You did well. Complete your work and hug your son Nigel, and wife Anna when you get home.”

"Yes Professor, thank you." Straighthand was dumfounded. He had never known Dumbledore well as a student, yet the man had remembered his wife Anna, and their son Nigel. He had worked at the ministry nine years and that arse Fudge barely acknowledged him in the building, usually saying "Good morning..." then realizing that he couldn't think of Nick's name, instead muttering "Carry on Auror." What a wanker, a politician with no people skills.

Back at the Ministry Amelia gathered her thoughts of the day.

Two related attacks in one day. The most wanted witch in Briton had been apprehended, dead or alive, a senior Ministry official found to be a Death Eater, charged posthumously for murder, apprehended, dead or alive. Two kids wanted for murder apprehended, dead or alive. Three others got away. Another Death Eater apprehended 15 minutes later, right where Dumbledore said that he would be. Another got away. On the plus side two Death Eaters dead, three apprehended. Also on the plus side, six kids got out of a certain death without a scratch. The plus side indicated that it had been a fabulous day.

It was the down side that was causing the tears to well up in her eyes. Nigel MacDonell was dead. He was a good man. Lee Jordan had been murdered. She too had heard his Quidditch commentary, and had seen his infectious smile. The world would be a little less bright without that kid. Tonks had been critically wounded. She wasn't even back from an unpaid leave, and she was giving everything that she had to make the world a safer place. The Weasley twins. Of all of the wizards in the world to select as murder victims, why would anyone want to take away a pair with such creative genius talent at letting people have fun? Their brother Ron. The kid was out of the frying pan at the department of Mysteries only to witness what would have been a multiple murder two months later. The kid could end up a resident of St. Mungo's.

She reviewed the action. Voldemort had sent a much larger force to raid the joke shop. That blasted rat Pettigrew had probably scouted it. One of the kids probably planted the bomb to begin with. Then rather than just kill them and be done with it, seven Death Eaters show up in

the joke shop to torment the occupants before killing them. What a bunch of sick shites.

Then like a white knight, Potter shows up. By a stroke of luck or genius he hit Lestrage first. Why had he used a Reducto charm? Had she had a shield up? It would have taken a profoundly powerful wizard to blow a shoulder off with out a shield, let alone with one up. The kid even had the presence of mind to call in for help. How many wizards kept a cell phone, and knew the emergency number? Hell, how many wizards even knew what a cell phone was?

Then he took out Umbridge. His ability to select the deadliest targets was uncanny. He had done the same thing two weeks before. Amazing. So why had he used Reducto? She found the answer when she recalled a conversation with him from earlier in July – “We were badly outnumbered, and the stunned Death Eaters kept coming back” at him at the Department of Mysteries. He had downed three there. Today he would have been badly outnumbered if he had not hit Bellatrix when he did. Tonks was downed five seconds later. It would have been six or seven to two. There would be no actions taken against him at all. She would do whatever it took to squash any call for use of unjustified force. If getting rid of two Death Eaters wasn’t enough, he saved Tonk’s life in his spare time. If he would allow it, she would use his pensive memory of the firefight as a training tool for her Aurors.

Tomorrow she would have Tonks and Shackbolt nominate Potter for the Order of Merlin. She would miss MacDonell. The wizarding community would miss Jordan, but the wizarding community was a safer place at six PM than it had been at six AM. She would make sure that the kids in that building knew that they had been rescued by a real hero. She closed the door to her office and went home. Tomorrow would be another day.

Thursday - 1 August – 8:00 PM – Grimmauld Place

Dumbledore had called an Order meeting that night. Remus took Harry and Hermione along with him. Most of the members were in attendance, except Tonks, Molly, and the twins. Dumbledore again decided to start the meeting with a summary of the facts as he knew

them. He did not know how Harry would handle the news. Seated next to Harry were Hermione on his left and Poppy Pomfrey on his right.

“Good evening. Today at eleven a group of seven Death Eaters attacked the Weasley joke shop in Diagon Alley. The raid was timed to coincide with the trial for Severus, which concluded remarkably quickly. Their plan apparently was to hide a bomb in the store and seal the entrance when the best mix of customers was there. At the time, there were six first or second year students shopping in the store, as well as Fred Weasley, Ron Weasley and Lee Jordan working the store. The plot was uncovered prematurely before the door had been sealed. Auror Tonks, George Weasley, and Harry Potter were approaching the entrance, and saw the Death Eaters as they had started to leave the store, firing the Dark Mark over the store. At the same time the Death Eaters must have been noticed by the inhabitants of the store. Lee Jordan was murdered with a killing curse. Fred Weasley was similarly attacked, but the curse missed, which started a fire that caused a small explosion of fireworks. Ron Weasley was apparently stunned.”

He continued, “Outside Harry Potter hit Bellatrix with a Reducto charm, mortally wounding her. She apparated away to the Riddle Manor. Tonks stunned Marietta Edgecombe. George stunned Carl Warrington. Tonks was hit with a curse from Delores Umbridge, and fell seriously wounded. Harry mortally wounded Umbridge. Prior to casting spells, Harry with remarkable presence of mind called the ministry for help. After Umbridge fell, the other Death Eaters fled and Harry gave first aid to Tonks, saving her life. George went into the shop and got his brothers and Lee’s body out safely.”

“At that time the Ministry Aurors, Mediwitches and wizards began arriving, apprehending the prisoners, getting the students out of the smoke filled store. Harry, Hermione and her parents were port keyed to the Ministry for safekeeping and de-briefing.”

“The Investigators were outside collecting evidence, and any eye witness accounts. I had arrived on the scene a few minutes later and suggested to Director Bones to station some Aurors outside Woodsworth apothecary, as one or more Death Eaters were in need

of more blood replenishing potion than Voldemort was likely to possess. Nick Straighthand, Nigel MacDonell, and Hestia were sent, and found two Death Eaters a few minutes later. MacDonell was killed. Death Eater Theodore Nott was apprehended. Death Eater Woodson escaped and went back to Riddle manor empty handed. Within a minute of the last inhabitant getting out of the smoking building, a bomb that had been planted exploded, injuring Mediwitches Smith, and Bigley who were nearby outside. It is our speculation that like the attack a few weeks ago on the Granger residence, today's attack was also designed to be an initiation for some new Death Eaters. Had the attack not been broken up by Harry, George, and Tonks, along with Harry's call for assistance, it is doubtless that there would have been nine or ten casualties."

He continued, "Severus, Kingsley, and Hestia went to Riddle Manor an hour later, and found that Voldemort had murdered Woodson. Bellatrix had by then died of her wounds. A quick search of the house yielded a box of the American wands that were recovered. Apparently Voldemort had made a hasty exit. No one else was there. Bellatrix and Woodson were port keyed back to Auror headquarters, along with the wands. Riddle Manor was torched, and to my knowledge, destroyed."

"Auror Straighthand was investigating in the wreckage of the joke shop when I went back there. He found a quantity of small marble sized steel ball bearings that had apparently been placed with the bomb to ensure death or crippling injury to the inhabitants."

Dumbledore concluded, "At this time, I will open the floor, for questions."

Hermione asked, "Professor, what are the conditions of those who were taken to St. Mungo's?"

Arthur responded, "I can perhaps answer that best. I just came from there. Nymphadora Tonks had a very serious head wound, and was bleeding very badly. Harry doubtless saved her life on the street before the Mediwitches arrived. She is still unconscious, but the Healers are optimistic. What is unknown is what the long-term effects will be due to her loss of so much blood."

He continued, "George received several nasty burns on his arms and back while carrying Fred, Lee and Ron out of the building. George was treated, and is expected to be released late tomorrow. Ron received minor physical injuries, but has suffered a rather nasty case of shock from witnessing the events. He is not speaking or responding to people. He was given some dreamless sleep potion and is expected to rest for a few days."

Pomfrey asked, "What about the Aurors and Mediwitches?"

Hestia answered. "Smith and Bigley received cuts and a broken arm, and a broken leg respectively from the explosion. MacDonell was killed in the fight at Woodworth's shop."

Hagrid asked, "What about Umbridge?"

Hestia answered. "She attempted to escape, and extra time was spent subduing her. The Mediwitches who had been trying to help her were injured by her bomb blast. She died from her wounds before being transported to St. Mungo's."

Hagrid muttered, "Served her right, that stinking witch."

Minerva asked, "Do we know who murdered Lee and attempted to murder Fred?"

Dumbledore replied, "No. The prisoners have not been interrogated yet, and the wands have not been tested. That will probably happen tomorrow."

About that time, Harry who had been feeling ill after hearing the news about Bellatrix, and Umbridge got up and ran to the kitchen. He threw up several times and was in a cold sweat. Remus, Hermione and McGonagall went to him, took him up to one of the rooms, and put him on one of the beds. After a minute, McGonagall came back and called for Poppy. She gave Harry a small sleeping potion. She and Lupin returned a few minutes later.

Moody was telling Hagrid about being ill for a week the first time he had to kill one of Grindelwald's goons.

Dumbledore resumed the meeting. "Are there other questions?"

"Do you have an idea where Voldemort left to go to?"

"I have my theories Alastor, but they are only that. Depending on how many Voldemort has recently recruited, his Death Eater count has been significantly impacted. I suspect that he has left England either to attempt recruiting, or is looking at getting the dark creatures to join his side."

"What happened to Severus?"

"Hagrid, he was convicted, fined, and sentenced to Rye Hill prison. He needs to report by Saturday morning. Due to a pre-trial appeal to the Wizengamot by Harry and the Grangers, Severus was given 48 hours to settle his affairs. Through the same appeal, Severus was sentenced to Rye Hill rather than Azkaban. Being a private prison, he is eligible to participate in a work release program. He will be working at the potions research center at St. Mungo's for treatments of two conditions."

"Is there any connection between the captured/killed death eaters and the previous attack?"

"I'm not yet certain. Their depositions will give us some clues."

"How did you know about Bellatrix?"

"Molly, that was a lucky guess. She had been scheduled to go on the raid at the Granger residence. I didn't think that she would allow herself to miss a second raid. She enjoyed killing too much to miss an opportunity."

"What can we do to help?"

"For the near term, learn what you can, stay safe, and most importantly support each other. Good night, my friends."

Remus walked up the stairs, and softly knocked on the door. Hermione was curled up on the top of the bed, behind Harry, holding her best friend. He got them up, they went outside, and port keyed back to the back of the Black Dog. They walked Hermione home, went back to the flat above the Black Dog, and fell into their beds. It had been a crappy day.

Ironically the bodies of Lee Jordan, Delores Umbridge, and Nigel MacDonell lay side by side in the Ministry Morgue. Lee had never thought ill of anyone, Umbridge rarely had a happy thought, and MacDonell just wanted to make the world a safer place for his family. Three more lives had been ruined by Voldemort.

Friday - 2 August – 8:00 AM – Granger residence

Hermione opened the Prophet and saw the headline.

Death Eater Attack Foiled

Story by Rita Skeeter

Another Death Eater attack took place yesterday in Diagon Alley. Lives were saved by the valiant efforts of Mr. George Weasley, Auror Nymphadora Tonks, and Mr. Harry Potter. The attack began as a plot to bomb the most unlikely of places, the popular shop Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes, a shop that is visited by hundreds of our children each day. Potter, Weasley, and Tonks had spotted the Death Eaters just as they were casting the Dark Mark outside the shop. Place in a life threatening situation, Tonks, Potter, and Weasley placed the lives of others ahead of their own, and fought off the Death Eaters. Potter mortally wounded escaped convict Bellatrix Lestrange (See page 4 for details) the most wanted witch in Britain. Delores Umbridge, Former Senior Undersecretary to Minister Fudge, showed her true colours and also received her just reward for her effort. (See page 6 for details)

Minister Fudge could not be reached for comment. Only months ago he was praising Umbridge's efforts at ramming unneeded changes down the school board of Governor's throats, and making foolish

changes at Hogwarts, Britain's premier wizarding school. Fortunately those changes were found to have been influenced by convicted Death Eaters and have since been reversed. (See page 8 for details on Fudges association with convicted Death Eaters)

Also captured in the raid were two other Death Eaters, one of which was a member of Umbridge's "Inquisitorial Squad," a brute force group formed by Umbridge during her nightmarish term at Hogwarts school. Umbridge had been placed there by Fudge. (See page 9 for details)

Anna Smith, a mother of one of the children slated for death in the store said, "I will forever be grateful to Mr. Weasley, Auror Tonks, and especially Mr. Potter. Without their efforts, I would be planning a funeral for my daughter Ericka. I am certain that the mothers of the other children feel the same. They are true heroes."

Auror Tonks was critically wounded in the attack. She is recovering at St. Mungo's, and is currently listed in serious condition. Dennis Creevey who also witnessed the attack was quoted as saying, "I thought those bloody Death Eaters were going to kill everyone in the shop. Harry and the other two really let them have it. They got what was coming to them. I hope the others are made to suffer for their crimes."

The Death Eaters are expected to be charged tomorrow with crimes ranging from murder, conspiracy to commit murder, attempted murder of an Auror, assault, possession of an unauthorized wand, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, damage to property, and unlawful display of a sign or symbol.

Killed in the attack was Mr. Lee Jordan. (See page 16 for biography) Several other unnamed employees of the store were injured, and are currently recovering at St. Mungo's.

Hermione put the paper down. There were tears in her eyes as she read about Lee. He was such a delight to know as a person. Rita was certainly writing accurately. She had turned into a great reporter, having given up that tabloid trash. She hoped that Harry would get

home early from the Ministry, so she could spend time with him. He looked so down last night. She was worried about her boyfriend.

Friday - 2 August – 9:00 AM – Director Bones' Office

Harry arrived at Director Bone's office at nine the morning after the attack. He was announced by Percy who seemed either in awe of or in fear of him for some reason. "Mr. Potter is here to see you Director Bones."

"Thank you Percy. Please show him in. We would like coffee and biscuits in fifteen minutes. That will be all Percy. Please close the door. Thank you for coming in again Harry, or should I say Professor Potter?"

"Harry. Just Harry."

"Thanks Harry. Amelia OK?"

"OK."

"Let me tell you what I know and we will work from there. Before we start, would it be possible to get a copy of your memory for my Solicitor's pensive? Then we can talk about it. Harry pointed his wand at his temple, muttered something and withdrew a long silver strand and placed it in her pensive. She thanked him. "We'll look at it in a moment."

She continued, "We believe that there were seven Death Eaters – Lestrangle, Umbridge, Edgecombe, Warrington, and three others. There may have been others involved. There were nine people in the joke shop – Fred and Ron Weasley, Lee Jordan, and six eleven or twelve year old kids who were shopping there. An anti-personal bomb had been placed in the shop. It was most likely detonated with a timing device, rather than by hand. Everyone was out of the shop by the time that it detonated. There were two witnesses who reported seeing a second Dark Mark set off possibly from the back of the building. It hasn't been confirmed. Who else do you think may have been involved in the raid?"

“It sounds like another training raid. My guess, based on the raid at the Grangers is that Umbridge selected the target, and was leading the operation, probably with people that she had recruited or trusted. Bellatrix probably went along as an overseer and to provide some extra firepower in case something went wrong. We saw them and fired as soon as I had called in. The raid had really started falling apart when Bellatrix was hit. We had each hit someone, and I hit Umbridge fourth. At that point the others started apparating, or port keying away, and I went to help Tonks as best I could. Some Aurors and Healers arrived, and they helped Tonks. A few others port keyed us to your office.”

He continued. “With respect to who the others were, in the case of Malfoy’s raid, they all had a tie to him. I wouldn’t be surprised if the other three who got away had a tie to Umbridge. Warrington was a member of her Inquisitorial Squad, and Umbridge got to know Marietta over the investigation of the defense group that I was leading.”

“Harry, who else was in the Inquisitorial Squad?”

“Millicent Bulstrode, Carl Montague, there may be others. Parkinson may have been involved. When are you going to talk with the prisoners?”

“Soon. Can we look at the pensive now?”

They replayed the scene. Harry heard the explosion and called the Ministry. Harry hit Bellatrix. Tonks hit Marietta, and George hit Warrington. Tonks got hit and fell badly. Harry hit Umbridge, the other three Death Eaters vanished, and George ran off to the shop. Harry held his hand over Tonk’s wound in a valiant attempt to keep her alive for another minute or two. It was over in less than twenty seconds.

Amelia asked, “Did you see anything that you didn’t notice the first time?”

“Yes. There was something going on in the shop. Maybe they had been seen by someone inside.”

“Good eye Harry. You did well out there. No one could have asked for more.”

Percy knocked, and brought a tray with coffee, cream, sugar, and several biscuits. He left without saying anything. He knew better than to disturb Director Bones.

She offered him a cup and asked, “Harry what questions would you ask the prisoners?”

What is your name?

When did you become a Death Eater?

What spells did you cast on the first of August?

Who made the bomb?

Who selected the target?

Who went on the raid?

Who else do they know to be a Death Eater or who is being recruited?

She asked, “What questions would be best for finding out what went on in the store?”

Who killed Lee Jordan?

Who tried to kill Fred Weasley?

Who stunned Ron Weasley?

Who helped you train for the mission?

How did you train?

Amelia continued, “Harry, you may not know this but there was a second fight yesterday. A Death Eater was captured, and one of our

Aurors was killed. The captured Death Eater was Theodore Nott, also a student. Every Death Eater that we've seen had at least a loose connection to Draco Malfoy. Auror Jones was involved with an unauthorized search of Riddle manor in Little Hangleton. That's in..."

"I've been there. That is Voldemort's Headquarters. He ordered Cedric Diggory's murder there."

"Harry, I'm sorry. I forgot that you were there that night. Merlin, you get around."

"Don't apologize."

"Anyways, she came back with two dead Death Eaters, Bellatrix, and Chuck Woodson. Woodson had apparently been killed a few minutes before he was found, probably by Voldemort. She also brought back a big box of those American wands that have been turning up lately. My point is his organization seems to be falling apart. I wouldn't be surprised to see a change in strategy, or a quiet period."

She got up. The meeting was over. She held out her hand. "Harry I can't thank you enough for all of your help. I will notify you of a trial date, when Edgecombe and Warrington are charged. Please enjoy the rest of your holiday in peace, and I wish you the very best at Hogwarts. Remember, we still have a date in two years."

"Thank you, Director Bones."

"Professor Potter."

They smiled at each other and laughed as he walked out the door. Percy spilled his tea standing up so fast when the door had opened. "Same old Percy," muttered Harry to no one. He found Remus in the outer waiting room.

"Let's go home," said Harry.

Remus had a hard time reading Harry's face on the way back to the car. Clearly Bones hadn't planted any blame on Harry's shoulders

during the conversation, but Harry didn't look like he had felt absolved of his guilt over the deaths, either.

Remus was worried about Harry. He hadn't said a word regarding his visit with Amelia that morning, nor had he eaten since the attack. Remus wasn't going to tell Harry that his actions were justified, or that everything would be all right. The reality was that Harry would probably never be the same person again. Regardless of the justification, the fact remained that he had taken two lives within twenty seconds. Rather than spend the rest of the day staring at DVDs, Remus turned the car around, and told Harry that they were going to visit Tonks at St. Mungo's.

They located a spot to park, and found the floor in the hospital. An Auror that Harry did not recognize was sitting in a chair outside the door. Remus went up to him and quietly announced himself and Harry as visitors. The Auror immediately stood at attention. He softly knocked on the door, opened it a crack, announced the visitors, and opened the door to let them in. As they passed, he said, "It is an honor to meet you Mr. Lupin, and Mr. Potter sir."

They thanked him, by name, and walked in the room. As they were going in, Remus said that he was going to find the Weasleys, and that he would be back in ten minutes.

Tonks looked so small lying in the hospital bed. Her light blonde hair was pageboy length. Her nose was a little smaller than Harry had seen, and her cheeks a little thinner. Harry thought that she was really a pretty young woman when she wasn't going for the punk or goth look. What impressed him however; were Tonks' light blue eyes. They were by any objective description, beautiful. She saw him standing in the entrance, and softly called him over, "Come here, loverboy."

Harry sat very gently on the edge of her hospital bed. "How are you Tonks?" She had only the thinnest of scars on the right side of her face where a gash had been a day before.

"Thanks to you, I'm alive and able to make smart comments at you. Harry, I'm trying to say thank you. I really appreciate you standing

with me back there. Most people would have run away. Given the chance, Bellatrix would have killed or tortured me in a blink. I owe you my life.”

Her eyes met his and for a moment they looked into each other’s heart. “Tonks, I messed up, and killed those people. I feel like shite.”

“Yes you did. Make no mistake about it, and I thank you. Harry, it was them or us. I know that you will never forget it. Don’t fight with me, please. Normally I’d be delighted to wrestle with you in my bed, but I’m too weak to give you a go today. Harry, just hold my hand and sit with me for a few minutes, OK?”

“OK. Thanks.”

She smile at him, “No worries, loverboy, and I meant what I said.”

They sat in comfortable silence for the next five minutes. Remus softly knocked and came in a few seconds later. “Harry, let’s trade people to visit with. The Weasleys would like to see you now. They are down the hall in rooms eleven and sixteen. I’ll catch up with you in twenty minutes.”

“OK. See you later Tonks, and thanks again.”

She winked, as he walked out the door. Seventy-five feet away he spotted a red-haired hurricane running at him at full speed, nearly knocking him over when he caught her. Harry had to smile. Ginny was so full of life. “Harry, thanks to you I have my brothers. She kissed him on the lips with such passion that a weaker willed man would have reconsidered the priorities of his life.

Mrs. Weasley walked up to them and hugged them both. “Harry, our family owes you everything that we have. You’ve saved Ginny, Arthur, Ron, and now Fred. I thank you Harry. You are my hero.”

“Please Mrs. Weasley. I didn’t do anything special. I killed two people. I can’t even look at myself.”

Ginny slapped his face, surprisingly hard. "Harry, that's crap. You saved eight people in the store and Tonks too. You did what you needed to do to keep yourself and people that are important to you alive. Should you have walked away? Those two witches would have killed you, your friends and those kids without a thought." Tears were in his eyes. She nuzzled and kissed his cheek. "I'm sorry Harry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

"You didn't hurt me Ginny. You are a good friend."

"And so are you, Professor Potter." She smiled at him in a way that would make most men blush. "Just wait until you get me in detention. I can be so naughty."

"Ginevra," said Mrs. Weasley looking exasperated, but smiling. "Don't you dare cause problems for Harry at school."

"I'd like to see Fred, George, and Ron now if I may?"

She hugged him again. "Of course dear, Fred and George are in here."

"Hiya Harry," said George. "You're looking good. It's great to see you."

Fred sat up. "Hey Harry. Are you ready to go out for a few pints?"

Harry smiled a very genuine smile. "Anytime you two are ready. It's great to see both of you."

Fred spoke up, "Thanks Harry. Seriously, I wouldn't be here, or anywhere for that matter if you hadn't stopped those lunatics. Thank you. I know that you had to do some crappy stuff, but... I just wanted to say thanks." He looked as sincere as Harry had ever seen.

Harry nodded, too choked up for words.

George spoke up. "Harry, it's really crappy about Lee, but everyone in there was gutted if it hadn't been for you. I about wet myself when I saw those pukes walk out of the shop and fire the Mark. You kept

your head, and sorted them out. You gotta look at it that some good people lived, not a couple of witches had to die. Like Fred said, thanks mate. We owe you everything.”

Harry mumbled something, waved and walked out of the room. Ginny gave him another round of hugs and kisses. She sat him down in a chair in one of the waiting rooms for a few minutes, standing behind him, massaging his shoulders until he had composed himself. He reached up and touched her hands, and said, “Thanks Ginny. You are a great friend.” She sat on the chair facing him, and crossed her very tan legs. “Harry, Ron is kind of in a hard way right now. Don’t expect too much.”

Harry looked at her, not having understood a word that she had said. “Help me out Gin, I don’t understand.”

“He sort of came unglued in the shop. He was tortured, and expected to die. He’s not talking to anyone, shakes a lot, and his eyes are unfocused, sort of like he’d been stunned, obliterated, and revived all at once.”

“How can I help?”

“Just sit with him for a few minutes. Please?”

Harry and Ginny walked in Ron’s Room. The Mediwitch who was there saw him come in, and looked like an embarrassed ten-year-old Ginny. Harry thanked her for taking good care of his friend. She looked at him, mumbled something and walked out of the room, dropping her clipboard.

Harry sat down, by his friend, held Ron’s arm and said, “It’s good to see you in one piece, mate. We’ll get you patched up, and go have a few pints when you’re ready.”

Ron didn’t answer. Harry just sat there, holding his friend’s arm. A few minutes later, Remus caught up with him. They said their goodbyes, and left.

Remus looked at his friend. "Thanks for going Harry. They all needed to see you."

Harry had come to realize that healing took many forms. He probably felt the same level of improvement from the visits as Ron or Tonks.

Friday - August 2 – 1:00 PM – Holding cells – Ministry of Magic

The holding cells at the lowest level of the Ministry were not horrible places like the prison fortress on Azkaban Island, but no one would mistake them for anything other than a jail. To prevent escape of their inhabitants they had every anti-apparation, anti-invisibility, anti-port key ward known to wizard kind. They were soundproof, and instead of the traditional bars, had steel sides and back with a transparent aluminum front wall and door. There was no privacy, no beds and buckets for plumbing. Marietta had not slept last night. The last year of her life had gone from bad to worse. Cho had dragged her to some meeting because she had a thing for Harry Potter and wouldn't go anywhere alone. She had marks all over her face for weeks. Somehow Professor Umbridge had taken an interest in her, which had been OK for a month or two until she left the school. Umbridge had appeared at her house the day after school ended to join an organization that would restore proper wizarding attitudes, and reward those who thought right. It turned out to be a hate organization, and once in there seemed no way out. The next thing she knew, she was planning on going on a raid to blow up a building, and had killed Lee Jordan in a scuffle at the shop. Why had she ever learned that horrible spell? They had told her she would probably never even need to use it. She had panicked when it looked like they were going to get caught in the shop. What were her parents going to think of her? Would she ever see them again? It hurt to move. There was a terrible pain in her right side.

A tall man with a shaved head and a diamond stud in his left ear opened the door and asked her to come with him. They walked 100 feet down the hall to a conference room. There was a table and two chairs. He asked her to sit down, and explained the deposition process. He administered the veritaserum. Behind the two way mirror sat Amelia Bones, with Hestia Jones acting as witness. The deposition recorded by a verbatim quill would be used as evidence in

her trial which would be held the following Monday, the fifth of August. Kingsley sat down and read through the questions for a moment before starting.

What is your name? “Marietta Edgecombe.”

When did you become a Death Eater? “I took the Mark three weeks ago.”

What spells did you cast yesterday? “Avada Kedavra.”

Who made the bomb? “A man named Wormtail.”

Who selected the target? “Professor Umbridge.”

Who left the bomb in the store? “Professor Umbridge.”

Who went on the raid? “Bellatrix Lestrange, Professor Umbridge, Millicent Bulstrode, Marcus Flint, Michael Montague, and Carl Warrington.”

Who killed Lee Jordan? “I did. He tried to stun me.”

Who stunned Ron Weasley? “I don’t know.”

Who fired at Fred Weasley? “I don’t know.”

Who helped your group train? “Mr. Wormtail and Mr. Travers.”

How did you train? Mr. Travers taught us the killing curse. He said to use it if anyone put up a struggle.

Kingsley looked into the mirror. He heard one tap on the glass indicating that there were no other questions. The girl had probably told them everything useful that she knew. He led her back to her cell that had most recently been occupied by Draco Malfoy.

Carl Warrington was next. He was led out of his cell and administered the veritaserum. A few minutes later, Kingsley began his questioning.

What is your name? “Carl Warrington.”

When did you become a Death Eater? “Eight months ago.”

What spells did you cast yesterday? “A stunner”

Who made the bomb? “Peter Pettigrew.”

Who selected the target? “Delores Umbridge.”

Who left the bomb in the store? “Delores Umbridge.”

Who went on the raid? “Bellatrix Lestrange, Delores Umbridge, Millie Bulstrode, Marietta Edgecombe, Marcus Flint, Peter Pettigrew, Michael Montague, and myself.”

Who killed Lee Jordan? “Marietta.”

Who stunned Ron Weasley? “I did.”

Who fired at Fred Weasley? “Millie.”

Who helped your group train? “Initially Voldemort, Bellatrix, and Pettigrew. Later Malfoy and Travers spent time with us. Wormtail showed Umbridge how to work the bomb.”

There were two taps on the Window. A piece of parchment was sent through the mail slot into the room.

What spells were cast on Ron Weasley? “Bellatrix cast the Cruciatus curse on him for a minute or so and I stunned him to shut him up.”

Do you know the names of any other Death Eaters? “Draco, Vincent, Greg, Greg’s Dad, Draco’s Dad, and Marietta’s Mum.”

There was one tap on the glass. Shacklebolt led Warrington back to his cell. He met back with Hestia, Dawlish, and Director Bones in the conference room.

“They were very interesting interviews. Well done Kingsley. Not a word to anyone about the last question. Is that understood?” They all nodded.

“Kingsley, take three Aurors with you and pick up Bulstrode at her parent’s house. Jones, take three Aurors with you and pick up Montague. Dawlish, take three Aurors with you and pick up Flint. All of you, be careful. Good luck.”

Amelia had wondered why Potter had chosen not to hook his fireplace up to the floo network when she and Susan had been invited to his party. She knew that he was living above the pub. Dumbledore or someone else must have advised him against it. Michelle Edgecombe, Marietta’s mother would have seen the floo registration, if there had been one.

Amelia went back to her office and pondered the interrogations. Marietta confessed to murder. She would certainly spend the rest of her days in Azkaban. What or who had drawn her down the road of darkness? How long had her mother been involved with the Death Eaters, either directly or on an as-needed basis? She had heard stories of Lucius Malfoy spending his way into people’s pockets in exchange for a small favor from time to time. Umbridge almost certainly planted the bomb that Peter Pettigrew had made. Would a single pensive memory be enough to have Black pronounced an innocent man? With Dumbledore on the Wizengamot, he probably would be declared innocent. She wondered what would a bombshell like that do for Fudge? She would make sure that Harry had the opportunity to see a copy of the interrogation transcripts. She thought that he had held up well so far. In 45 years on the Auror force, she was eternally thankful that she had never had to pull her wand and take a life.

She was pleased, but surprised that Marietta and Warrington had named the other team members. So much for Voldemort’s legendary veil of secrecy. With a lot of luck, they would be in holding cells by the end of the day. With a tremendous amount of luck, all of the Aurors would be going home to their families at the end of their shifts.

An hour passed. Hestia Jones returned. Montague had been killed after attempting to kill Auror Smithson. The Dark Mark was on his arm. Smithson had a nasty cut on his arm, but would return home by evening.

Kingsley returned a half an hour later. Millicent Bulstrode gave herself up without a fight. She was currently in holding cell number 3. "Well done Senior Auror Shacklebolt. I am very glad that you and your team got back without anyone being hurt."

Twenty minutes later, she received the call that she dreaded every time she sent people out. Marcus Flint had cast a killing curse on Auror Dale Dawlish before apparating away. Flint had been seriously injured by Auror John Thomas, and was presumed to be down. Dawlish went up to him without stunning him again for safety. Flint pulled a second wand from his wrist holster, hit Dawlish, and apparated away. She went with another team out to the site to investigate, but nothing could be done to change things.

Saturday - 3 August – 7:00 AM - Hogwarts

The Prophet was full of deadly news.

Death Eaters, Auror Killed in Knockturn Alley

Story by Rita Skeeter

Theodore Nott, 17 was charged yesterday afternoon with the murder of Auror Nigel MacDonell 32. In a surprise second skirmish that turned deadly, Ministry Aurors fought two other Death Eaters outside Woodworth's. Auror MacDonell was murdered trying to apprehend the two. Director Bones was quoted saying "Auror MacDonell died trying to protect the lives of innocent witches and wizards. I will always remember Nigel as being a good and courageous man."

Death Eaters, Auror Killed in Separate Captures

Story by Rita Skeeter

In three separate incidents a Death Eater was killed, an Auror Killed, and a Death Eater was captured. Curt Montague, 17 was killed resisting arrest, after attempting to kill an Auror who was bring Montague in for questioning relating to the bombing in Diagon Alley on 1 August. Auror Dale Dawlish was killed attempting to bring Death Eater Marcus Flint, 21 in for questioning relating to the same bombing. A third suspect has been brought in for questioning, but has not been charged yet.

Black Foundation Donates Big to Slain Auror Family Fund

Story by Rita Skeeter

The Sirius Black War Victims Fund announced the donation of 20,000 Galleons to aid the family of slain Auror Nigel MacDonell who was murdered by a Death Eater. Gringotts spokesman Wheelcart presented the bank draft to MacDonell's widow, yesterday evening.

Two Death Eaters Charged in Diagon Alley Bombing

Story by Rita Skeeter

Amelia Bones announced today that Marietta Edgecombe and Carl Warrington were charged for crimes relating to the vicious bombing of Weasleys Wizarding Wheezes on 1 August. Marietta Edgecombe, 17 was charged with the murder of store employee Lee Jordan, attempted murder ,and damage to property. The maximum sentence if found guilty is life imprisonment in Azkaban and significant fines.

Carl Warrington, 18 was charged with attempted murder, assault, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia and possession of an unauthorized wand. The maximum sentence if found guilty is fifteen years imprisonment in Azkaban and significant fines. The trial date is expected to be announced tomorrow.

"Albus, how did we ever let all these children go so very wrong?" asked Minerva. "The only sixth year Slytherins left are Pansy Parkinson and Blaise Zabini."

“Some of their choices were overly influenced by their parents. Many were influenced by the friends that they chose to keep, and some due to excess allowances that Severus, and ultimately I myself allowed. We will need to give Professor Chang every assistance to help our students see the value of making wise choices.”

Saturday - 3 August – St. Mungo's

Kingsley arrived outside room 11 at St. Mungo's. He needed to interview Fred Weasley and his brother. He arrived at Fred's room first. Arthur was just leaving. “Hello Kingsley.”

“Hello Arthur. How are your boys doing?”

“On the whole, better. George was released yesterday, and is spending a few days at home with us. Fred should be released today or tomorrow. His injuries have largely healed. Ron...needs some time to collect his thoughts. I wish that Harry were around more to spend time with him. The only improvement that he has made came right after Harry had come for a visit. I need to be going, and didn't mean to keep you from your duties. Take care Kingsley.”

“You too Arthur.” Arthur shook his hand and walked away. Kingsley knocked and opened the door to Fred's room. “Hello Fred,” said Kingsley. “It looks like you are doing a lot better than the last time that I saw you.”

“Good morning, Auror Shacklebolt. How do we do this? Have a seat.”

“Thank you Fred. I will set up the verbatim quill, and ask you some questions relating to the bombing. Please be as specific as you can. If you need to stop for a minute at any time, just say so. If you are not sure of something, it is OK to think about it for a moment before answering. If you don't know an answer, please say so. At the end if you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them if I can. OK?”

Fred said, “I am ready.”

What is your name? “Fred Weasley.”

Are you one of the owners of the Weasleys Wizarding Wheezes joke shop located in Diagon Alley? "Yes."

Were you there on the first of August in the morning? "Yes."

Please describe what happened about 11:00 AM. "Lee and I were at the counter. Ron was in the back getting some additional stock to bring out. Seven Death Eaters walked into the shop, and rounded up everyone. There were six kids who had come in to look around."

Did you recognize any of the Death Eaters? "Yes. Umbridge, Flint, Montague, Marietta Edgecombe, and I believe Bellatrix Lestrage."

What happened next? "Lee tried to stun Marietta. She killed Lee. Bellatrix found Ron who had seen what was happening, and was hiding in back. She cast the Cruciatus curse on him, and was having fun torturing him for a minute or two. Some of the Death Eaters were getting ready to leave, and something happened outside. I believe that Harry, Tonks, and George had seen one of the Death Eaters casting the Dark Mark. Bulstrode tried to kill, me, missed, and started a fire in the shop with the missed spell. Umbridge got the other Death Eaters out, and tried to seal the door. Either she didn't have time, or messed up the spell, because it never closed properly. About half a minute later George came through the door, and got me out first. He went back and found Lee, and carried his body out. He went back a third time to look for Ron. Someone else got the little kids out. A few minutes later the bomb that they left went off, and blew up the building."

Kingsley nodded. Emotion was getting the better of Fred. He asked, "Can I stop for a moment?"

"Sure. You did fine. I just have one or two more questions. Tell me when you are ready."

After a minute, Fred had composed himself. "OK. Let's go."

Did you happen to see or hear anything or anyone out back before or during the raid?

"I wasn't in a position to. Ron may have."

"Thank you Fred. This ends the deposition. Do you have any questions for me?"

"Where is Lee's body?"

"His parents arranged a private service for him this morning. No one was invited."

Kingsley went to Ron's room. A healer was in looking after him. Kingsley introduced himself. The Healer suggested that he either come back in a week or two, or he keep it to one or two questions. Kingsley got set up, and said, "Ron. My name is Kingsley Shackbolt. Do you recognize me?"

"Yes."

Can you tell me what happened at the shop the first of August?

"They were about to seal the door and let the building b, burn up until it exploded. Something happened outside, and they never got it shut. Umbridge tried to kill Fred, missed and started the fireworks. Someone else killed L, Lee. Someone put the Cruciatus curse on m, m, me. The kids were screaming, and there was blood, screaming and blood, screaming..." His eyes went unfocused again. His shaking worsened. The healer sent Kingsley away.

Kingsley had seen Cruciatus victims before, but aside from the Longbottoms he did not know anyone who was as messed up as this kid. He needed all of the help that he could get. If this was the improved Ron, he hated to think what he was like before. He reviewed the document that the verbatim quote had written, and signed it. There were no inconsistencies from the depositions that Edgcombe and Warrington had given. He would probably get a statement from the Bulstrode girl next, and Director Bones would present the case to the Wizengamot for scheduling.

Saturday - 3 August – 1 PM – Ministry holding cell interrogation room

Senior Auror Shacklebolt was ready to start the interrogation with Millicent Bulstrode, the sixteen year old girl who had been captured and arrested yesterday. Witnessing were Auror Hestia Jones and Director Bones.

What is your name? "Millicent Bulstrode."

When did you become a Death Eater? "Three weeks ago."

What spells did you cast yesterday? "Avada Kedavra"

Who made the bomb? "Peter Pettigrew."

Who selected the target? "Delores Umbridge."

Who left the bomb in the store? "Delores Umbridge."

Who went on the raid? "Bellatrix Lestrange, Delores Umbridge, Carl Warrington, Marietta Edgecombe, Marcus Flint, Peter Pettigrew, Michael Montague, and myself.

Who killed Lee Jordan? "Marietta."

Who stunned Ron Weasley? "Carl did after Lestrange had tortured him"

Who fired at Fred Weasley? "I did"

Who helped your group train? "Mostly Bellatrix and Wormtail"

How did you train? Bellatrix taught us the killing curse.

Aside from your group, do you know any other Death Eaters? "Edgecombe."

Marietta? "Michelle."

There was one tap on the glass. The interview was done. Kingsley took her back to her holding cell, and went back to talk with Director

Bones in her office. She showed him in and closed the door, telling Percy that there were to be no interruptions.

“So Senior Auror Shacklebolt, are there any holes in the bombing case?”

“Only that Pettigrew is still at large. Umbridge selected the victims, planned it and planted the bomb. Lestrangle tortured the younger Weasley brother, Ron. Marietta Edgecombe panicked, and killed Lee Jordan. Bulstrode attempted to kill Fred and set the building on fire. Warrington stunned Ron to get him to shut up. They heard a disturbance outside, got in a rush to leave, and either got picked off or got away within twenty seconds.

He continued. “Voldemort must have sent the others away afterwards because he was busy with Bellatrix. They were all ready for someone to try to pick them up, and had made their decisions to fight or surrender.”

“What are your thoughts on the Woodworth case?”

“Immediately after sending the three returning bombers away, Voldemort told Chuck Woodson and Theodore Nott to go get some blood replenishing potion. Bellatrix must have been fading fast by then. Nott got captured, after he fired on Nigel MacDonell. Nott got stunned, while Woodson returned to Voldemort empty handed. It was the last thing that he ever did. Voldemort probably killed him himself. About then, Lestrangle was suffering, and Voldemort did her as some sort of mercy killing. He must have sent everyone away immediately afterwards, as there was no one else there, and the bodies were still warm. I have no idea where he went, but my belief is that he would bring Pettigrew along with him. What do you think?”

“I think these raids have so depleted his resources that he left to revise his strategy.”

At that moment, Michelle Edgecombe walked in. “Amelia, I’d like to speak with you, alone.

"It's Director Bones, Mrs. Edgecombe. I've earned it. I am in the middle of a meeting with Senior Auror Shackbolt. If you have something that needs to be said right now, either say it, or make an appointment with Weasley."

"I demand to see Marietta this afternoon."

Amelia, thought for a moment. She could expose Michelle right now as a Death Eater, ending her employment at the Ministry, but turning a Death Eater loose, or order a search and probably get her for a fineable offense, or just let her see Marietta, or they could force the issue and see if they could draw her out. She decided on forcing the issue, down in the anti-apparition rooms. "That's not a problem, Michelle, we'll be done in about five minutes. I'll be happy to take you myself. We'll meet you outside."

After Michelle left to wait in the lobby, Bones said to Shackbolt, "Edgecombe and I will go down to the conference room together. Be waiting there in the observation room. I will have her leave her wand up here. Assume that she has another in her left sleeve. I will confront her, and see if she makes a move. OK?"

"OK, boss. Be careful. I like working for you."

She opened the door. "Dismissed Senior Auror Shackbolt. Enjoy your evening."

"Thank you Director. I hope to have a woman's clothes off by the end of the evening. Oh, excuse me Mrs. Edgecombe. I didn't know you were there."

"Come in Michelle. I have to maintain procedure around the troops, or who knows what will happen. We can go see Marietta now. I apologize, but you will need to leave your wand up here. Standard procedure you know."

"Of course."

They took the stairs to the detention level. The door to the detention level was locked. She made a show of unlocking it, having them both go through, and not re-locking the door.

They walked to the interview room. The table was gone. In its place were four chairs. Amelia left the door open. "I'll get her in a moment. Michelle, several of the people that we interviewed in the last few days indicated that they knew you. Why did you sell out?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Of course you do. Providing information when it was asked for was an easy start. How long have you been a Death..."

Michelle drew a wand. "Avad..." A flash of red light came from a wand pointed through the mail slot. Edgecombe went down before she could finish her thought.

Bones drew her own wand and stunned her a second time. Kingsley walked in. "Well done Senior Auror Shackbolt. That went quicker than I expected."

"Thank you Director."

"Well Mr. Shackbolt. It can be your choice. You may search the prisoner per your stated wish, and place her in cell number 5, or you can call in one of the other Aurors, and we can go have a beer at the Leahey Cauldron."

"Only if you buy, Director."

"Let's go. It's been a long day."

Sunday – 4 August

Dan Granger enjoyed making breakfast for his family. Today they were having a simple meal of toast, bagels, fried ham, juice and coffee. It was going to be a fabulous day, sunny and warm. They would go to church, and then enjoy the day. He had come to accept the oddities of the wizarding world that his daughter belonged in. He realized that Hermione would most likely marry into that world, and if fate would have it, produce beautiful grandchildren who could do amazing things. He wondered about the war that was being waged around him. It didn't seem to follow the usual reasons, land, religion, color, or wealth. Rather it seemed to be some perversion of class. What did this Voldemort lunatic really want?

An owl fluttered down outside the window. Dan called, "Hermione, your paper is here."

She took the paper from the tawny owl, gave her a piece of her father's toast, put the money in the pouch, and the owl hooted as it flew away.

Trial Date Set for Death Eaters

Story by Rita Skeeter

The trial for the Death Eaters charged in the 1 August Diagon Alley bombing has been set for Monday 5 August. At least seven Death Eaters took place in the raid that left store employee Lee Jordan Dead. Two Death Eaters were killed in a firefight outside the shop. It is not known if Minister Fudge will attend the trial.

Shopkeepers Fred and George Weasley were both injured in the blast. They are expected to testify on Monday.

Death Eater Found Murdered

Story by Rita Skeeter

In a bizarre twist Death Eater Chuck Woodson was found murdered in Little Hangleton, at a residence rumored to have been used by

Voldemort as a hideout. Woodson, 38 was found dead at the scene dressed in Death Eater garb, apparently murdered with a killing curse. Woodson is believed to have accompanied Theodore Nott, 17 in the deadly raid outside Woodworth Apothecary which resulted in the murder of Auror Nigel MacDonell. In a related story Little Hangleton fire Marshall Bill Blundell reported that the same house apparently caught fire the same day. The cause was listed as accidental, probably due to a careless smoker.

Hermione put the paper down. Twenty-one Death Eaters had been killed or captured in the last six weeks. Four people from the light side had been killed, four seriously hurt. From what Harry had said, Voldemort didn't have enough Death Eaters to keep the war up at this rate. What made this so strange was that she knew or had met most of these people – ten at the Department of Mysteries, three at her house, the six at the joke shop, one at Woodsons, and the last from Voldemort. Nine of the twenty-one, she had known from Hogwarts. Harry had an active part in nineteen of the victories, borrowing the term from the old airplane battles. That was probably more than most of the current Aurors.

Hermione called Diane asking if she would like to have lunch with Harry and her. They agreed to meet at the Black Dog. She called Harry and made the same plans with him.

They ordered their lunches and beers. Hermione excused herself to go up and look for a book. Diane smiled at Harry and asked the unexpected, "Harry I was wondering if you could do me a favor sometime?"

"Sure. How can I help?"

She looked a little embarrassed. "I was wondering if you would take me flying again sometime. I really loved it."

"I would be happy to, but we couldn't do it here."

"Right. Buzzing Big Ben might not be a great idea. What 's your schedule this afternoon?"

“Hermione’s busy, but I’d be happy to go with you. We could get a portkey made and go to Inverness by school, or we could drive out to the Weasleys.”

“How far away are they?”

“About 150 miles. Is that too far?”

“No. We could catch up on the way out, and I could still get you home late tonight.”

“I’d like that.”

“Hermione said that you had a pretty crappy week.”

Harry shook his head. “I can’t even walk down the street minding my own business for ten minutes without something happening.”

“Harry, do you want to talk shop, or have lunch? Either is fine with me, but a lovely young lady is hovering behind you, just out of earshot.”

He waved her over. “Let’s have a nice lunch. I’ll share my dark secrets with you later this afternoon.”

Hermione came over, kissed the top of his head, and sat down. They had a great lunch. Tim took great care of them as always. Harry paid, and went upstairs. He came back carrying a hard shell case that he had gotten to protect his Firebolt. Hermione had an idea of what they were up to, and kissed him goodbye when they dropped her off at her parents’ house. She didn’t ask to come along, as she knew that Harry needed time to talk with Diane. “Have a good time. Say ‘hi’ to Ginny. I’ll see you tomorrow. I love you Harry.”

“Thanks. I love you too. I’ll call you early.”

Harry got back in Diane car and they started off to Ottery St. Catchpole.

“OK Harry, what’s been going on in your life since your birthday party?”

"I keep getting thrown into these situations that decide someone's fate. With Snape, I made arrangements to keep him from going to wizard prison, which probably would have meant his death. I made arrangements to have him work on a cure for two wizarding conditions that affect people that I know. Then after his trial, my friends Tonks, George Weasley and I stumbled on this group of Death Eaters. They were in the process of blowing up the Weasley brothers joke shop. I had the choice to stun the Death Eaters. Instead, I chose to use spells that killed two of them. Everyone is calling me a hero. I killed two people."

Diane hadn't exactly expected this. "What do the people that you talk with say when you mention that point?"

"They don't care. All they talk about are the number of people that were saved."

"Then I'll ask two questions – First, does wizarding law have a dead or alive clause?"

Second question, why did you decide to use one type of spell rather than another type?"

"To the first question, I don't know for sure, but believe that the justifiable use of force in a defensive situation has some wide open guidelines. To the second question, last June, a dozen Death Eaters attacked Hermione, myself, and four other friends. I stunned three of them. That basically is a spell to make them unconscious. Unfortunately, there is a counter spell that takes less than ten seconds to reverse the effects. As a result, last June, everyone that I stunned came back for a second fight. The spell that I used this time certainly would disable them. I'd never used it on a person before."

"Are you absolutely positive that you would have won last week if you had stunned them instead?"

"No. Tonks was down, and I think that George would have been beaten. If none of the Death Eaters had been revived, it still would

have been four or five against one. Tactically, I realize that it was the right thing to do. Emotionally, I feel really bad about it.”

“What do the police, I mean Aurors who have been through this before have to say?”

“I haven’t had that conversation yet with Moody. I should.”

“Harry, here’s my take. You did what you had to do to save the good guys. If you hadn’t done what you did, the bomb would have gone off and a lot of people would have been killed. The bad guys would have gotten away to do it again. You are supposed to feel really bad about having to take a life, but you shouldn’t let it eat you up.”

They arrived at the Weasleys a few minutes later, about mid afternoon. They stopped in to say ‘hi’ to Ginny and went to the paddock out back. Diane loved flying, probably even more than Harry, because she hadn’t become accustomed to the magic of it all. It was different than riding on the back of a motorcycle, because it was three dimensional, and there was no engine noise or vibration. There was only the sound of nature, birds, leaves, and the wind in their hair. She wondered if all of witchcraft was tied to nature.

After a while, Ginny came out, and asked if she could fly with them. They flew side by side, played follow the leader, and a simple game of catch throwing apples between the two brooms. Dinner at the Weasleys was quieter than usual. Bill had popped in for a few minutes to say ‘hi’ and get the latest news. Arthur was eyeing Diane’s car in his usual inquisitive way. She told him that he was welcome to go out and look at it a bit quicker than a person who knew his quirks would have. Harry wanted to stay until it got dark so they could fly at night. Molly and Arthur left to go to St. Mungo’s to visit Ron.

Diane and Harry went out again just after sunset. It was different flying at dusk and night than during the daytime. There were the lights below them to look at, but there weren’t the visual reference points to aid their flight. It really was a bit more dangerous than it appeared. They flew along at about 500 feet. The sensation of being in the air was amazing. No propeller, no wings, just flying through the air! What a rush. They got back to the Weasleys about ten. Harry went in to say

goodnight to Ginny, and gave her a friendly hug. She kissed his cheek, and gave him a friendlier hug. "Thanks for coming over Harry. Please come again soon, or we can meet in Diagon Alley."

The ride back was quieter than the ride out for about the first hour. Diane asked, "Harry are you folks winning this war that is being waged?"

"I don't know. I never thought about it that way. Voldemort and company feel like a combination of the organized crime that I see in the movies and some sort of terrorist group. They're not really robbing people, at least of money. They have this perverted notion that they are somehow better than someone else, or that people who do not agree with their viewpoint shouldn't be allowed to live. Take Hermione for instance – she probably embarrassed Malfoy over the years by beating him in every class at school. That kind of flies in the face of their 'I'm a pureblood, I should be better than you' attitude that some of the families have."

She nodded. "Harry can I ask you a personal question?"

"I suppose."

"Why do you love Hermione? It's obvious that most of the witches in Britain would love to be in your arms tonight, yet you never seem to notice."

"All I want to be is Harry, just Harry. Professor Potter is nice, or maybe Auror Potter someday, but that's it. Hermione just sees me. She's smart. She's beautiful. She's my best friend. We would do anything for each other. I don't have aspirations to shag every easy girl that sticks their fanny in my face. I like having a regular girlfriend, and if it turns into more, then it was meant to be. Does that make sense?"

"Harry, you are probably the most well grounded young man that I have ever met. Hermione and you deserve each other. I'm certain that she feels the same way about you. Take care of each other, and I am certain that you two will have a lifetime of love." They got back to the Black Dog pub. "Harry, thank you for showing me a fantastic

evening. I really enjoyed myself. I hope that your new job works really well for you this year. Remember to take care of yourself.”

“Thanks Diane. You too.”

She gave him a friendly hug and left.

An owl was waiting for Harry at the perch by Hedwig’s cage Monday morning with several letters. Harry took the note addressed to him, the owl hooted, and flew off.

Professor Harry Potter,

You and a guest (Hermione) are invited for the day at Neville’s. We are celebrating Neville’s 16th birthday. (A week late) Please come at noon Wednesday the seventh of August at Neville’s Grandmother’s home. There will be games, swimming, dinner and dancing. Plan on wearing casual dress during the day with wizardwear for dinner. Ask Hermione. The floo network would be the easiest, unless you have your own transportation. Neville lives in Kent about 40 miles east of Hermione’s.

RSVP to

Ginny Weasley

Harry had finished making breakfast. He heard a knock on the door and put down the letter. It was Hermione, carrying a shopping bag. “Hi Harry,” she said, giving him a hug and kiss. Harry was delighted to see his girlfriend, but a bit surprised that she wanted to accompany him to yet another trial. She sat down to a very nice breakfast. Remus was a few minutes getting up. She asked, “Did you have fun at the Weasleys?”

Harry nodded. “We talked some stuff out on the way over, and flew until dinner with Ginny. Mr. And Mrs. Weasley had dinner with us. Bill stopped by to say ‘hi’ for a few minutes. We flew again after it got

dark. That was different, but kind of fun. We drove back and talked some more on the way. I think we got back at one."

She looked at him carefully. "Do you feel better?"

"Yes. Thanks. Diane suggested that I continue to take good care of you."

"Good advice. I hope you follow it. Did she really say that?" Hermione had never seriously considered what the two of them might be talking about for hours at a time.

"Yup. By the way Miss Granger, have I mentioned that I think you are beautiful yet today?"

"No, but thank you. Did I mention that I love you today?"

"No, but thank you." Harry kissed her. "We are invited to Neville's on Wednesday for a birthday party. I'm supposed to ask you what to wear. We can get him something this afternoon."

"That sounds like an excellent day, Mr. Potter," said Hermione.

"Good morning, Hermione," said Remus. "Are you ready for yet another trial?"

"Yes. How are we getting there?"

"Portkey, so you may want to finish getting dressed here. What are the plans for this afternoon?"

"We would like to do some shopping in Diagon Alley, if it is all right with you. Hermione and I were invited to Neville's for the day on Wednesday."

"We could go see Ron, and see if we might help at the shop for a while, if you have the time," said Hermione.

"We should be able to do both," added Remus. He finished his sausages and cereal. Harry really did make a good breakfast. "Hermione, can I get you more coffee?"

“Please. Thank you.”

Remus cleaned up, while Hermione changed into her robes. At 8:30 they touched the portkey, and found themselves in the waiting room, outside Director Bones’ office. They walked down the hall and down the stairs into courtroom ten.

Inside, they met Fred, George, and Tonks. They looked around and saw Mr. And Mrs. Weasley, Lee’s parents, the Longbottoms, a dozen of the students in the DA, Cho, the kids who had been in the joke shop, their parents, a few of the other Aurors, Professors McGonagall, Sprout, and Flitwick. Rita Skeeter and Bozo were there. Harry looked at her and smiled. She nodded back. Narcissa Malfoy was also there, along with a few others that Harry did not recognize.

Like the first trial that Harry had participated in, the spectators were seated first. Director Bones, the Aurors and the witnesses came next. The defendants were led in and chained to the chairs. There were additional chained chairs sitting empty for the defendants that had been killed, and a last one for Marcus Flint, who was listed as missing, presumed dead.

Director Bones read the charges for each of the defendants.

“Marietta Edgecombe, you are charged with, the murder of Mr. Lee Jordan. You are further charged with eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.” Marietta kept her eyes down.

“Millicent Bulstrode, you are charged with the attempted murder of Mr. Fred Weasley, eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.” Like Marietta, Bulstrode kept her eyes down, not looking once at the Wizengamot judges.

“Carl Warrington, you are charged with assault of Mr. Ron Weasley, eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an

unauthorized wand.” Warrington looked her in the eye and nodded an acknowledgement.

“Theodore Nott, you are charged with the murder of Auror Nigel MacDonell. You are further charged with the possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.” Nott looked defiantly at the judges.

“In absentia, the following charges are also made.”

“Delores Umbridge is charged with the manufacture of an explosive device, eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, assault of an Auror, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.”

“Bellatrix Lestrange is charged with the torture of Mr. Ronald Weasley by means of the use of an unforgivable curse, eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, assault of an Auror, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.”

“Curt Montague is charged with the attempted murder of an Auror, eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, assault of an Auror, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.”

“Marcus Flint is charged with the murder of an Auror, Dale Dawlish. He is further charged with eight counts of conspiracy to commit murder, assault of an Auror, damage to property, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.”

“Chuck Woodson is charged with assault of an Auror, possession of Death Eater paraphernalia, and possession of an unauthorized wand.”

The depositions of Marietta Edgecombe, Millicent Bulstrode, and Marcus Flint were presented to the full Wizengamot. All 48 active members were in attendance. Wizengamot judges Edgecombe or Umbridge had not yet been replaced. Aurors Tonks, Shackbolt,

Jones, and Strighthand, made their presentations. George Weasley talked about carrying the body of Lee Jordan and his two brothers out of the building before it exploded. Finally Harry discussed his part in the ordeal.

The judges deliberated for a surprisingly short period of time, much less than one hour. Finally they returned. Dumbledore read the verdicts.

Marietta Edgecombe – guilty of all charges.

Millicent Bulstrode – guilty of all charges.

Carl Warrington – guilty of all charges.

Theodore Nott – guilty of all charges.

Curt Montague – guilty of all charges.

Chuck Woodson - guilty of all charges.

Delores Umbridge – guilty of all charges.

Bellatrix Lestrangle – guilty of all charges.

Dumbledore stood up and talked to the defendants. “As a favor to your families I made many of the repairs to the building myself. As such your families will only be assessed to the estimated contents of the building itself. The estimated content loss was 5,525 galleons.”

He looked at each of the defendants, remembering when they were first year students trying on the sorting hat. “Do any of you have anything to say before we pronounce our sentences?”

None had a comment or plea prepared. Only Bulstrode indicated that she was sorry, and thanked Dumbledore for repairing the building. The sentences were passed out, and the

Prisoners were led away. Bozo had taken several photos immediately after the sentences were read. Harry and the others left after the

judges had left the room. Hermione suggested that they have lunch at the Leaky Cauldron before their afternoon of shopping and helping at the shop.

Harry got Neville a pair of dragon hide boots. They were very dark green, like his own pair. Hermione got him a wand holster from Ollivanders. Mr. Ollivander suggested a wrist holster that would fit Neville's new wand.

Harry and Hermione went to the joke shop. The sign on the front of the store said, closed for repairs. They walked in and said 'hi' to Fred, George, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. Hermione went up to the twins and gave each of them a hug. Harry was greeted warmly by Molly and Arthur. To reopen before school started which was their busiest time, the twins needed money to pay their suppliers for the items that they resold. Without being asked, Harry wrote Fred a Gringotts bank draft for twenty thousand galleons and quietly handed it to him. He told Fred, "I'm sorry that I wasn't able to help Lee, but I can help you two get yourselves back on your feet again. This is a no interest loan, payable to either my estate or my children. Whatever I can do to help you get opened by next week, please let me know. Hermione and I are having lunch with Rita Skeeter in two days. I will ask her to write an article promoting your store. Can you be open by Monday?" Fred excused himself who went to talk with George for a few minutes. George came back, and told Harry that the joke shop would open Monday at ten AM and requested that Harry and Hermione both come for the grand re-opening. They said that they would. Then George asked that they spend the afternoon, or whatever part of it that they could visiting Ron.

After leaving the joke shop Harry and Hermione went to see Ron at St. Mungo's. He was being attended to, so Hermione went to get a couple of cups of coffee. The healer saw him there, apologized for keeping him waiting. She said that she would come back in a few minutes. Harry smiled at her, and thanked her for taking care of his good friend. She blushed, and walked away. Harry walked in the room.

Ron saw him in the door. "Thanks for coming to see me Harry. Come in."

Harry walked in the room. Ron was sitting up in his bed. Harry gave him a pat on the arm and said, "It's good to see you looking better Ron. Are you feeling better?"

"Better when I heard that you b, blasted that witch. W, Where's her arm?"

Harry replied, "I don't know. I never asked. They chucked it in a bin I suppose. When do you think you might be ready to leave St. Mungo's?"

Ron smiled faintly. "They said that I could leave F, Friday if I wanted to."

"Would you like to come stay with me for the weekend? It would be a first. If you're up to it, we could have a pint together."

"Yes. P, Please."

"OK. I'll pick you up at nine in the morning." Should I see if Luna could come on Sunday?

"OK. Thanks, Harry."

Harry sincerely hoped that Snape was working overtime on that potion.

The mail arrived Tuesday morning, and Remus took the letters and newspapers from the hooting owls. He gave them each a part of a piece of toast and some fresh water from Hedwig's dish. He put the coins in the newspaper owl's pouch, and they all flew off.

The Prophet was full of articles relating to victories over Death Eaters.

Death Eaters Found Guilty

Story by Rita Skeeter

The trials of eight Death Eaters charged in various crimes in connection with the 1 August bombing in Diagon Alley and related skirmishes with ministry Aurors ended with the convictions of all participants, living or dead.

Delores Umbridge was found guilty of masterminding the bombing. Her estate was fined

57,250 galleons.

Escaped convict Bellatrix Lestrange was found guilty of the torture of one of the employees of the shop. Her estate was fined 57,250 galleons.

Curt Montague, 17 was found guilty. His estate was fined 57,250 galleons.

Marcus Flint, 21 was found guilty of the murder of Auror Dale Dawlish. His estate was fined 57,250 galleons. The body of Marcus Flint has not yet been recovered. He is believed to be dead.

Theodore Nott, 17 was found guilty of attempted murder of an Auror. He was sentenced to 20 years in Azkaban and fined 2,000 galleons

Marietta Edgecombe, 17 was found guilty of the murder of Lee Jordan. She was sentenced to 20 years in Azkaban and fined 57,250 galleons.

Millicent Bulstrode, 16 was found guilty of attempted murder of one of the owners of the shop. She was fined 5,000 galleons, the maximum amount that a minor could be fined.

Carl Warrington was found guilty of the assault of one of the employees he was fined 57,250 galleons.

Flint, Warrington, Edgecombe, Bulstrode were each additionally sentenced to fifteen years in Azkaban for the attempted murder of eight people who were in the store at the time. The fifteen years is in to of other sentences or fines applied. In a surprise move it was

announced that all 345,500 galleons in fines levied were paid immediately by a single Gringotts bank draft from an unidentified source.

Remus was surprised that Narcissa would choose to pay all of those fines herself. He wondered whether she had previously been directed to by Lucius, or was doing her small bit to make the world a better place by cashing out his estate. Remus mentally compared the Malfoy estate to the Black estate. If they were similar in size, the last month would have nearly wiped out the available cash. If this continued, the estate holdings might get sold off. Perhaps Dumbledore had been premature in repairing the building.

He read the next article.

Floo Official Arrested

Story by Rita Skeeter

In a surprise move yesterday, Law Enforcement Director Bones announced that Michelle Edgecombe, 39 of the Floo Network office was arrested, charged with crimes including attempted murder of an Auror. Senior Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt was quoted as saying that the witch (Edgecombe) set up an elaborate scheme in an attempt to break her daughter out of prison. A Trial date of the seventh of August was announced. If found guilty, Edgecombe faces twenty years in Azkaban plus fines.

Harry came over. Remus showed him the articles. Obviously it was no coincidence that Dumbledore had advised him against hooking up to the floo network. Harry wondered how the man might have known.

Harry came over and read his letter. It was from the School Board of Governors.

Dear Mr. Potter,

By unanimous decision, the British Board of Wizarding Education Governors finds that you meet all qualification for full provisional professorship. Specifically this means that we believe that you have

met all qualifications necessary you be considered a full professor at Hogwarts School for the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school years. It is our hope that you continue your own studies on an independent basis, and complete your NEWT examinations in the next two years as you normally would. We wish to express our gratitude that you are willing to share your vast knowledge of Defense Against the Dark Arts with our country's most valuable resources – the wizarding youth. Should you require any assistance, or additional resources that the board of governors may provide, please do not hesitate to ask. You have our fullest co-operation. We truly wish you success in your new endeavor.

(Hand signed by all twelve members of the board)

Remus looked at the letter with Harry and smiled at his friend, saying, "Well done Harry! That is fantastic news. So what are your plans for the day?"

"Hermione and I are having an early lunch with Rita Skeeter."

"Is this for an interview?"

"No. I suspect that it will be more of an exchange of ideas. She seemingly has shifted her position away from being pro-Fudge to pro-light side. Remus, what's your current view on Fudge?"

"I think he is on incredibly thin ice politically. He was so closely tied to the Malfoys, and solidly supported Umbridge last year. As such, he is very weak politically. At the same time, he has done nothing in the last three months to hurt us. Dumbledore, Arthur or Madam Bones could have called for a vote of no confidence against him, and removed him from office if they had chosen to. As far as that goes, you probably could start a movement yourself if you set your mind to it. Is this a rhetorical conversation, or has he invited you for dinner?"

Harry shook his head. "Rhetorical. Why would I want to have dinner with Fudge?"

"You wouldn't but he'd probably love to be seen having dinner with you. Harry, part of my bias is quite personal. They passed some anti-werewolf legislation a few years ago that made it all but impossible

for me to get work in the wizarding world. A year ago, he seemingly tried to get you expelled from the wizarding world. What we don't know is what his own views really are, unaided by Malfoy."

Hermione knocked on the door. Remus let her in.

"Hi Remus. Hi Harry. I brought bagels for breakfast."

"Thanks. Would you like coffee or tea?"

"Coffee and orange juice, please if you have any." She smiled at her boyfriend.

Hermione asked, "Remus, can we have another look at the library in the next week? I would like to go through a few more of the books before school starts. Harry, has Professor Dumbledore told you when you would be going back to school yet? The last few weeks before school starts would be a good opportunity to get you started on your individual study coursework."

Harry replied that he hadn't heard yet.

They finished their breakfast and read for a couple of hours until it was time to meet Rita downstairs. They wanted to get there first to avoid giving away the location of Harry's flat. After about fifteen minutes, she came in the pub.

Harry greeted her. "Hello Ms. Skeeter. Thank you for coming to such an out of the way location. I didn't get much of a chance to talk with you last week. I wanted to compliment you on your high standard of journalism, and thank you for your discretion regarding the handling of the trial of Severus Snape."

"Good morning Harry, Hermione. Harry, the pleasure is mine. Just so you know, here is my view on the world. It has a lot to do with my change in journalistic style. Currently I believe that we are in the middle of a pretty intense civil war. You seem to be in the thick of it. I'm not passing judgment, simply making an observation. Every time you take a Death Eater off the street, good people stand a better chance of living. I heard about your new status at Hogwarts. When

you believe the time is right, I'll write something about it, not before. The last time staff changes were published prematurely, bad things happened. I believe that you are and will play a major part in cleaning up the wizarding world, now and in the future. In ten years, maybe much sooner, I see you in either Dumbledore's or Bone's position. I see either move as being good for the wizarding community. If I can help the movement by reporting fairly and appropriately, I am happy to help. I'm not asking for anything in return. We got off on a bad start, and I just want to make things right between us. Does that make sense?"

Harry agreed, saying, "Someday the whole story will be ready to be told, and I would be happy if you were the one doing the telling. In the mean time, I was wondering if you might be willing to make a small mention that the Weasley brothers are going to re-open their store on Monday the twelfth of August?"

Rita agreed. They finished their very good lunch. Harry paid, and they parted ways. Hermione, commented, "Harry, you handled yourself very well. Can we go upstairs for a while?"

They walked upstairs. Remus excused himself, and went downstairs to have a long lunch. He badly wanted to know how things went with Skeeter, but knew that Harry would tell him when he was ready. Besides, Harry had not been able to spend much leisure time with Hermione lately, and was unlikely to in the last few weeks of the month. Dumbledore was likely to ask Harry to begin his personal training any day now.

They put on a CD, opened a few butter beers and sat on one of the futons. Hermione looked at Harry, and started. She had rehearsed the words for a few days, but rehearsals and live deliveries are never the same. "Harry, do you love me?"

Harry looked at her, a bit surprised at the question. "Of course. I love you very much."

She took a breath. "Harry, if I asked you to make love with me would you?"

Harry paused for a few seconds. This was not what he had expected. "Yes. I'd really love to, but are we both ready to?"

Hermione steeled herself and replied, "I think so."

With every ounce of self-restraint that a sixteen year old male could possibly possess, he looked her in the eye and asked, "What's on your mind?"

"Harry, all these girls and women are throwing themselves at you. Do you know that there are crates of fan mail stored for you at school? Half of them contain photos of pretty witches with offers of marriage or just a casual shag. How can you keep saying 'no' to them?"

"Because I only love you, Hermione Jane."

"Oh."

"Hermione, I don't care about other girls. I love you. No one else matters to me. If you want to make love with me, and we both are ready, than we will, not because you need to do something that you or I might not be ready for some wrong reason. OK? If there are crates of mail at school, so be it. I've never seen them and I don't care about them."

"Oh."

"Hermione, I'm not looking at any girls but you. I hope that you know that. When we're ready to get engaged we'll know it, but I don't think we are ready quite yet. Maybe we will be ready this winter or next summer. We both have a pretty busy year right now. I don't want to end up on the wrong side of the kill or be killed prophecy. Being in love with you has given me too much to live for."

She gave him a soft hug, caressing his neck. "Thanks. I'm sorry to have brought this up, but I want the world to know that I love you Harry Potter."

"Oh. Thanks. I'll work on that."

“Well, how about some serious snogging with your girlfriend then?”

“I’d like that, a lot. Remus won’t be up for an hour or so.”

They spent a fantastic hour together learning about each other. Harry marveled at the books she must have been reading. Downstairs Remus was having a great time conversing with Tim, the bartender. Meanwhile the owl to Harry from Dumbledore that would end his youth was on its way.

Remus came up an hour later and softly knocked on the door before walking in. He sat at the kitchen table and said to Harry, “When you have time, we should look at some disbursements from the fund. I was thinking 20,000 each for the families of MacDonell and Dawlish. What about for Lee Jordan? 10,000? Harry and Hermione nodded agreement. Remus said that he’d write to Griphook that afternoon.

Wednesday - 7 August – 7:00 AM – Hogwarts

Minerva read the Prophet. She couldn’t remember ever being so proud of any of her students before.

Relief Fund Helps Three More Families

Story by Rita Skeeter

The funds from the Sirius Black family estate were put to good use again this week when Gringotts estate spokesgoblin Wheelcart announced that generous donations were made to the families of fallen Aurors Nigel MacDonell and Dale Dawlish, and to murder victim Lee Jordan. This weeks grants totaled 50,000 galleons. This reporter applauds the efforts of the fund trustees.

Not only were they doing a wonderful thing for people, but they were doing it without looking for something in return. The fact that they seemed to have tamed Ms. Skeeter at the same time was an added bonus.

She showed the article to Hagrid, who was in for the morning. “They’re the best, those three. Sirius would be right proud of Harry,

the way he's turning out. His folks would too. Hermione's a good influence on him and on Remus too." Minerva agreed.

Wednesday morning came, and Harry had received a letter from the twins.

Harry,

You are the best. Rita Skeeter stopped by yesterday with her photographer. He took a couple of photos and said that she might be able to run an article sometime this week. With your help things are progressing well.

Ever at your service,
Gred and Forge

Rita was certainly quick. Harry looked at the headline of the Prophet and smiled.

Bombing Victims Refuse to Give Up

Story by Rita Skeeter

The bombing victims from last weeks Death Eater attack have vowed not to let the Dark Forces get in the way of people having fun. Fred Weasley co-owner of Weasleys Wizzarding Wheezes, 92 Diagon Alley told me that the popular joke shop would be ready for a grand re-opening on Monday the twelfth of August at ten AM. Co-owner George Weasley said, "The people have a right to have a laugh and we intend to make certain that they do." Asked about the speed that the shop was able to re-open Fred attributed it to "friendship and support from good people who believe in our cause." They vowed to have their full line of products available to pranksters, and would personally deliver any items that may have to be back-ordered.

This reporter believes that their cause is just, and wishes the brothers much success in their endeavors.

The accompanying photo showed the brothers restocking a shelf. Harry hoped that the article would be inspirational for people who saw the destruction that Voldemort had launched. Hopefully it would also be a boost for their business. Harry read his other letter.

Dear Harry,

I hope that you have had some rest and relaxation over the summer. If it is possible, I would like you to return to Hogwarts by Saturday evening 17 August. It is time to start your private lessons to begin fulfilling our obligations to you. We will begin on Sunday with a morning, afternoon, and an evening subject. If you can have your transfiguration, charms, and potions books read through, or have at least gotten a good start on them, it will be helpful. I will send you a portkey the morning of the 17th. You will want to have purchased a larger trunk by that time, if you have not yet done so.

I was informed of your full Professor status by the board of Governors. Be assured that the magnitude of their show of confidence is well warranted, and without precedence in my (considerable) experience.

Best wishes,

Albus Dumbledore

Harry put down the letter. He knew that Dumbledore was right having him start early, but for once in his life, he was really enjoying his summer holiday. A part of him knew that the moment he set foot in those doors, the last remnants of his youth would be gone forever.

Harry refused (for the third time) Remus' offer to drive them to Neville's instead settling for a (very) thorough run through of the driving directions. Harry had been practicing on the motorcycle around the local streets for the last few weeks, and on the ground was a pretty decent novice biker. He had avoided the temptation to use the exotic features of the bike so far. He picked Hermione up at the Grangers after promising Mrs. Granger that they would ride safely and call if the weather got bad. Also Hermione promised that they would call when they got to the Longbottoms in the western edge of Kent. Emma took a picture of the two standing next to the bike in their

helmets. They got on and rode off. It was another lovely summer day, sunny, warm, with a light breeze. They wore jeans and a sweatshirt, having swimsuits, Neville's gifts, and their wizard wear in the saddle bags of the Triumph. Harry was a careful driver, and Hermione was a good navigator. They found the house about an hour later. They stopped the bike after finding a place to park. Hermione was just done calling her mum when Neville came out.

"Hi Harry. Hi Hermione. Way cool bike Harry! I didn't know you had a motorcycle."

"Hi Neville," said Hermione giving him a friendly hug. "Sirius gave it to Harry."

"Wow."

Harry, saw Neville looking at it with more than casual interest. "Neville, if you want, we can go for a ride later. OK?"

"Thanks Harry. Come on in."

They unpacked the saddlebags and brought their things in with them.

Neville's Grandmother greeted them at the door. "Mr. Potter, how nice to see you again. Good afternoon Ms. Granger. Please come in." Harry was slightly disappointed not seeing a vulture hat on her head.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Longbottom."

"Lorraine, Harry," she said, shaking his hand harder than he would have expected. "Ms. Granger, please excuse us for a moment. Neville and I need to have a quick word with Mr. Potter." Hermione, felt a bit hurt, but knew what this discussion would mean to Neville and his Grandmother. She found her way into the back garden.

Mrs. Longbottom, guided them into the study, closed the doors and motioned for Harry and Neville to be seated. "Harry, I know that you have had to tell the story before, but please indulge an old woman and her grandson. Please tell us what happened to Bellatrix Lestrange. Spare no details."

Harry sat down in one of the brass button trimmed leather wingchairs. "OK ma'am, but before I start I need to say that I am not proud of having taken a life." They nodded in respect. "She had just walked out of the Weasley brothers joke shop after torturing our friend Ron Weasley. A total of seven Death Eaters came out of the door. They weren't looking our way. They were too busy casting the Dark Mark. Delores Umbridge was attempting to seal the door after one of the others had started a fire in the shop, and a bomb had been planted in the building. I called the Ministry for assistance. Auror Tonks asked George and I to help her stop the Death Eaters. I fired first, at the person who I thought was the leader of the group. It turned out that I had hit Bellatrix in the shoulder with a Reducto charm. It hit pretty hard. Her arm came off at the shoulder. She was bleeding pretty badly. She turned to me, shrieked and apparated away. The Aurors found her dead a few hours later. Meanwhile, two others were stunned, and I killed Delores Umbridge with the same spell. The others apparated away, and were found later. George got his brothers out safely and Lee's body. Other Aurors arrived and got the other kids out of the building before the bomb went off. Tonks had been wounded pretty badly, and I was able to help her a little before the Mediwitches arrived. It was all over pretty quickly."

Mrs. Longbottom looked like a woman who had just been told that she had won the lottery. "Thank you for sharing the story Mr. Potter. Please have a drink with Neville and myself. I know that her death will not bring Frank and Alice back to health, but it does bring some degree of closure for me." She poured them each a glass of single malt whiskey. They drank together. One hundred and ten year old Scotch was not a taste that Harry would soon forget! "Stop by and see me before you leave Mr. Potter. Please enjoy your day."

"Thank you Mrs. Longbottom."

Ginny and Luna were out by the pool in their bikinis. Neville was looking at a copy of Quidditch Weekly while watching Ginny in her swimsuit. Harry and Hermione changed into their bathing suits and joined the people out back. Susan Bones came a little later with Shamus. They had a really good time together. Alastor Moody came

later along with several of the retired Aurors that had known Frank and Alice.

Dinner was a bit formal for Harry, but he knew that was how Mrs. Longbottom ran her home.

Neville liked all of the things that people had gotten him. He seemed to like the wand holster from Hermione the best. "Thanks Hermione. I always wanted one, but Gran wouldn't get me one."

She hugged him. "Happy birthday Neville. It is very nice to see you again. Harry and I want to spend more time with you this year."

Before it was time to go, Harry remembered that Mrs. Longbottom wanted to speak with him. She brought him back into the study and closed the door.

"It is known within certain close circles that you and your friend Mr. Lupin are directing a trust fund to aid deserving war victims. It is my fear that the need will soon exceed your current resources. I ask you to accept this small contribution, and continue with your efforts." She handed him a Gringotts draft for 50,000 Galleons. Harry didn't think the Longbottoms to be wealthy, and realized the relative magnitude of their donation.

"Thank you Mrs. Longbottom. I hope to be able to return this money to you because the war ends early. Perhaps the need will not be as great as we fear."

"I fear that you will be looking for additional contributions far sooner than you think. I cannot thank you enough for your efforts. May the wind always be at your back, Mr. Potter."

Friday morning Remus had picked up Ron at St. Mungo's. He had other errands to go on, and left. Harry met Ron outside the door. They walked into the Black Dog and ordered a pint with their lunch. Harry opened his wallet and handed Ron a slip of parchment with the words Harry's place is above the Black Dog pub on it. He said, "Read

it to yourself and give it back please.” Ron looked where Harry pointed. A doorway appeared.

Ron grinned. “Wicked.”

Harry paid for their lunches, unlocked the door, and they went up the stairs. Harry unlocked the other door and invited his buddy inside.

To say that Ron was awestruck would have been an understatement. Harry could only compare Ron’s reaction to his own the first time that he had been taken to Diagon Alley. “Harry,” he said, “This is fantastic! Look at all of this stuff.”

“It’s not fancy, but I like it.”

“Harry, what is all this stuff?” asked Ron pointing to the entertainment center. Harry showed him the big TV, the CD player, and the DVD player. Ron was amazed. Harry sensed that an inherited trait was about to display itself.

“Sit down. I’ll get you a butter beer. Harry went into the kitchen. Ron was still looking around. He noticed the various books that were on the still mostly empty bookcases.

“Wow Harry. These aren’t class books. Have you read any of them?”

Harry nodded. “I’ve read quite a few so far.”

Ron looked puzzled. “Why? School doesn’t start for another three weeks.”

“It is information that I want to know, Harry said, putting away the restricted Auror training books. Director Bones had been quite clear that they were not for public consumption. It occurred to Harry that Ron did not know that he would be teaching in the fall. He let it go for a moment.

Ron asked, “Do you like living here by yourself?”

Harry sat down, pointing to the other stuffed chair for Ron. "Actually, Remus has been staying with me for the summer. After my aunt and cousin were killed, there was no reason to stay at Privet Drive any longer. Remus offered to have me stay with him at Grimmauld Place, but this seemed better."

"I'll say so. No one to tell you to de-gnome the garden, or when to get up, or to make your bed."

"True, but if I don't make breakfast, I don't eat. If no one cleans the dishes, I won't have any clean ones."

"I see your point. Harry you need a house elf."

"No I don't, but I do miss Dobby."

"That nutter? Get a proper house elf Harry."

"No. Thanks."

Ron changed the subject. "Do you think that Dumbledore will let you back on the house team this year?"

"I won't be playing Quidditch on the Gryffindor team. That was my choice."

Just then, Hermione knocked softly on the door. She let herself in, and said "Hi Harry." She saw Ron, walked over, and gave him a friendly hug. "It's good to see you, Ron."

"It's good to see you too, Hermione. Did you know that Harry isn't going to be playing on the Quidditch team this year?"

Hermione looked at Ron for a moment. "Well they don't let the teachers play, do they? Harry is teaching DADA this year."

Harry looked embarrassed. This is not how he envisioned the conversation playing out. "I was getting around to telling you Ron."

Ron composed himself. Apparently he had a lot of catching up to do. "That's brilliant!" He was grinning. "Finally there will be a proper teacher for the subject. That explains all of the books. What will you be doing?"

"I'm getting tutored for my own classes in the mornings and evenings. I will be teaching the practical portions of the defense classes in the afternoons. The defense classes will be longer than the other classes. Moody will be teaching the theory pieces. Remus will be teaching the third year classes. The goal is to prepare everyone so they stand a much better chance of being able to defend themselves."

"That's a great idea."

"Thanks. So pretty much, my summer started out moving here and seeing Hermione. Then we had the attack at her parent's house and the trials that went with that. Then there was the attack at your brothers' and the trial that went with that. I've been spending a lot of time with Director Bones. Hermione and I have had the chance to do a little shopping, but that's about it. Oh. I forgot. I also spent a week in the hospital wing."

"So much for the hospitals. At least the healers came in to talk with me. How about a game of chess?"

Ron proceeded to beat Harry in a surprisingly close match. The pieces hadn't been used much, and did not give either player an advantage.

Harry told Ron, "You'll need to hold tryouts for the team this year. Hopefully someone better will turn up for beaters. Have you thought about it?"

"I was hoping to hold tryouts for all positions for the team this year. Ginny may want to play chaser this year rather than seeker."

"Has McGonagall talked with you about being captain?"

"Yes. She sent me the badge the day before the attack."

Harry patted Ron on the shoulder. "Brilliant. I know that you deserve it, and will do a great job. Maybe the Slytherins will play fair this year."

"Thanks, Harry."

"For what? You deserve it."

"Not that. For being there for me and my brothers."

"That's what friends are for. Let's call Luna and see if she can come over tomorrow." Harry dialed her number on his cellular telephone, and handed it to Ron.

"What's this?" he asked, handing it back to Harry.

"Oh, for goodness sake, Ron. It is a cell phone. Hello Luna. It's Hermione. I'm over at Harry's with Ron. We were wondering if you could come over tomorrow? That would be great. It's the same place that we had the party. Hold on for a second. Ron wants to say 'hi' to you." She handed Ron the phone.

"Luna. Can you hear me? I can hear you."

Harry and Hermione looked at each other, trying not to laugh. They walked down the stairs. Hermione said, "If ever there was someone who needed to take muggle studies it is Ron."

Ron came down a minute later, and handed Harry the phone. "I don't get it. There's no wire."

"That's the idea. You can take your phone with you," said Hermione.

"That's how I was able to call for help that day in Diagon Alley," said Harry.

"Oh. Brilliant."

Harry said to Hermione, "Let's have your parent's and Diane over for dinner tonight too. It would be a nice treat for your folks not to have to cook, and I haven't seen Diane since we went flying together."

Ron looked at Harry like he was crazy to invite another girl over in front of Hermione. She saw the look and explained, "Diane is a good friend of my mums. One of her grandparents was a squib. She knows about our world. She was over at your parents' house the other day flying with Harry." She made the calls, and set everything up.

Remus came in, and greeted Ron. He told Harry that he would be gone for part of the evening, and would miss dinner. He asked them if they needed anything before he left. They had everything that they needed for dinner, so he left. He knew that Dr. Turnbull would be coming over, and eventually have the chance to talk with Ron. He wouldn't want any more company than needed.

Harry made a pan of split chicken breasts over rice in a white sauce. It was very good. Ron was amazed that his friend could cook so well. It was doubtful that Ron could make a piece of toast by himself. Emma suggested that they go for a walk after dinner. Diane and Ron stayed behind to talk a bit. An hour and a half later, they went back upstairs. Ron was in tears talking with Diane. They excused themselves, and had desert in the pub. Tim had made a great pie. Dan and Emma excused themselves, and asked Harry to walk Hermione back later. They thanked Harry for dinner. Harry said, "The pleasure was mine, Dan and Emma. Thank you for coming. I'll have Hermione home by ten."

"Eleven would be fine, Harry. Thanks again for a great dinner." They left leaving Harry and Hermione alone to visit for a few minutes.

"I love you Harry," she said, brushing a pie crumb off of her blouse.

"I love you too Hermione." She gently kissed him. "Let's go see how Ron is doing."

They walked up the stairs, and opened the door. Things seemed to be in better order. Ron was talking about Quidditch, and bragging up Harry's seeker exploits.

They all laughed when Diane said that Harry seemed like a pretty responsible flyer.

Ron said that Harry had always had a thing for winning, even if it meant getting his arm broken or falling off of his broom. "He had a real mania about winning until Umbridge kicked him off the team."

Ron hadn't realized what he had said. The room fell silent. Finally Hermione recovered, and said, "That chapter is closed. Let's move on. Harry, it's getting late. Could you walk me home now?"

Harry had made one of the futons up as a bed for Ron. Diane was getting ready to leave too. She thanked Harry for dinner, and gave Hermione a hug goodnight. Harry told Ron that he would be back in a few minutes, after he took Hermione home. They started the walk home. Hermione said, "That toad has the common sense of a flobberworm."

"He didn't mean anything by it. I'm not sure what anyone's told him. We'll sort it out. Don't worry about it."

"You're a very good friend to him Harry. He's lucky to have you as a friend."

"You are my friend. He is my buddy. I can count on you. Ron is fun to hang around with and do stuff with. There's a difference. Goodnight Hermione. I'll see you tomorrow."

Harry walked home reflecting that Hermione was an exceptionally good kisser.

Saturday - 10 August

Harry got up on Saturday and had breakfast ready by the time Ron opened his eyes. Harry never failed to marvel at the amount of food that Ron could consume. After breakfast, Remus cleaned the dishes as usual, and said that he had to spend some time at his cottage, taking the whole day.

Harry sat down on the big chair across from Ron to talk. Ron started. "Harry, you had warned me, didn't you?"

"What?"

"That day you came to visit at the joke shop. You warned me about the blood and screaming of a Death Eater attack. I thought it sounded so cool when you told me about the attack at Hermione's." Ron took a steadying breath. Harry waited silently for Ron to collect his thoughts and continue. "Harry, it wasn't. When they walked in, I went and hid. Bellatrix found me. She mocked me and c, cast the C, Cruciatus curse on me. I had no idea of the pain it would be. Then George came in and the building was on f, fire. I had woken up. I was so scared. George carried Fred out. Then he carried Lee out. I was so scared that he wouldn't come back for me. I lost it. I was screaming for him. Finally he came for me. The building blew up a minute later. I was sure that I was going to die Harry." Ron was breathing hard. "I'm not strong, like you."

Harry shook his head. There was no reason to let Ron begin a series of self depreciating comments. "No one said that, Ron. You lived through it. Your brothers lived through it. The kids in the store lived through it. Everybody was scared. Who knows what would have happened if you guys had started some sort of duel in the shop? It could have turned out a lot worse. Next time you might be the one kicking their arse. Bellatrix won't bother you again. You survived. Keep that in mind. OK?"

Ron thought about what Harry had said for a moment and nodded his head. "Thanks Harry."

"Cheers. Let's go find Luna and Hermione. OK?"

“Harry...”

“Huh?”

“I don’t want to be an Auror anymore.”

“That’s OK. Maybe you will be a professional Quidditch player. I think I’d like to go and watch you play on Saturdays.”

Ron grinned slightly, wiping the tear from his eye. “You’ll get the chance pretty soon, won’t you?”

“Right. Let’s go.”

They walked downstairs and met Hermione and Luna. Hermione had a pair of tan shorts on with a skinny top that fit her very well. Harry noticed that she looked really good in them. Luna was dressed about the same. She was a bit more muscular than Hermione with sun bleached blonde hair that fell below her shoulders. Harry thought that it must have been the result of the various outings with her father. Away from the weirdness of her usual outfits, she really was a pretty girl. Harry and Hermione sat on one side of the booth. Ron and Luna sat on the other side holding hands. They ordered their lunches.

“It’s good to see you up, Ronald,” said Luna. “You look like you’re feeling much better than when I saw you at St. Mungo’s.”

“Thanks. I like seeing you here better than looking up from a hospital bed.”

Luna smiled. “Well thank you, Ronald.”

They finished their lunch. Harry paid Tim and they walked over to the Grangers. Emma was home for the afternoon, and very happy to see the teenagers. “It’s nice to finally meet you Ron and Luna. Hermione has said such nice things about both of you. What are your plans for the afternoon? How about if I take you either to the mall or the zoo?” Everyone (except Harry) wanted to go to the zoo, to watch Harry talk with the snakes. The boa in the zoo seemed to remember Harry. He

had been put back in his cage an hour after Harry had set him free. It was the only time that he'd been out of his cage, as he had been bred in captivity. Harry reminded him that it was almost fall, and he couldn't survive outside in the winter in the cold. He said goodbye, swayed his head at everyone, and asked them to come again. Harry remembered the time that the glass disappeared and how the snake had gotten out. He thought about how Dudley ended up in the cage with the glass back on. Part of him missed his cousin. Part of him remembered how Dudley had acted towards him the other 99 percent of the time.

Hermione saw his introspective look, walk over and held his hand. "Are you all right?"

Harry kissed her forehead. "I was just thinking about when I was almost eleven. I did a pretty good show of accidental magic in this room. I vanished the glass, apparated Dudley into the cage, let the boa out, and replaced the glass."

Luna nodded. "I put out a fire when I was nine. I'm not sure if it was accidental or not. I may have seen my mother or daddy do it, and have known the incantation."

"Hermione asked, "Was that when...?"

"Yes. My mother had blown up the kitchen. It was awful. It was an hour or so until daddy came home. Mum had died by then. I didn't know what to do."

Hermione hugged her tightly. She thought about how awful it must have been for a barely nine year old girl to sit and helplessly watch her mother die of injuries. "You were with her. Maybe that was enough."

Luna wiped the tears from her eyes. "I never thought of it that way. Thank you."

They spent the rest of the afternoon just being sixteen – holding hands, making faces at the animals and having a great time. Mrs. Granger picked them up and dropped them off at the Leaky Cauldron.

"I'll pick you up in an hour and a half," she said. They had ice cream at Fortiscues, and then Ron and Luna used the floo at the pub to get back home. Harry found a seven-lock trunk like Moody's in a shop. He ordered two trunks with their names engraved on the little brass plates that were on the front of the trunks. Hermione asked him why he was getting two trunks.

"I know you have more stuff than will fit in the normal school trunk that you have in your room," he said. "Besides, I like getting you things."

"Oh...thank you." She kissed him.

"Thank you."

The merchant showed him how to magically shrink the trunks, and re-expand them. They carried both trunks out in Hermione's bag. They had dinner at the Granger's. Hermione showed her parents their new trunks. She was quite a bit more excited about the idea than Dan. He said, "Your other trunk was heavy enough." Harry then charmed the trunk, so it weighed less than a pound. Dan said, "That's a brilliant idea, Mr. Potter. Thank you!" Hermione went to put her trunk away.

It occurred to Harry that he would not be taking the train on the first of September this year. Dan said to Harry, "Hermione said that you would be leaving for school in a week. How do you feel about teaching this year?"

"I hope that I can help some people learn the skills to be able to defend themselves."

Dan nodded. "I wish you a lot of success, Harry."

"Thanks, Dan."

"That's better."

"Harry, can I ask you a personal question?"

"Of course."

“Do you really love my daughter?”

Harry said without hesitation, “Yes sir, very much.”

“That’s nice to hear. You do treat her very well. Please do everything that you can to keep her safe this year.” Dan was certain that Harry had no idea how hard it was for a parent to calmly plead for him to keep his daughter out of harm’s way.

“Yes sir. You know I will.”

“Harry, sometimes the best reaction to an attack is to run away. You can always fight back when the odds are in your favor. My worry is that I don’t think it’s in your nature to run away.”

“I understand your concern sir, but I respectfully disagree. Hermione and I are here tonight because we initially ran away that night in June.”

“Harry, I’m just pleading with you to do what you can to keep a young lady that we both love very much and would die for out of harm’s way. Just do what you can.”

“I understand. You can count on me sir.”

“You’re a good man Harry. It’s a nice night outside. Why don’t you go for a moonlight stroll with your girlfriend?”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Harry...”

Harry smiled at him. He had really come to like spending time with Hermione’s Dad. “Good night, Dan. Thank you for dinner.”

“Always a pleasure.”

They walked for a long time talking about how much better Ron had seemed. Harry pointed out that Diane had helped him a lot. She

probably had done the same for Ron. Hermione suggested that they invite her to a Quidditch game after school had started. They walked back to her house and kissed good night for a very long time.

When Harry got back, he found Remus up reading a book. "Hi Harry. How was your day?"

"Good. Ron seemed better. Dr. Turnbull is very good at what she does." Remus nodded, waiting for Harry to continue. "She helps you realize that everything doesn't have to be perfect, or always have a reason. She is good at helping people shed guilt that they are carrying over things that aren't their fault." Remus nodded. He wasn't sure if Harry was talking about her having helped him, Ron, or both.

Remus spoke. "It's too bad that the wizarding world doesn't have that kind of resource available. I could have used it myself. That's another good reason for you to keep a tight hold on your lovely girlfriend Harry. She has useful friends. Did you decide when you want to go back to Hogwarts?"

"I'd like to go Saturday morning. How about you?"

Remus was dreading telling Harry this. "I won't be living there, just coming one day a week. Other days, I'll be staying in my cottage in Notts County. This has been the best summer that I can remember, but I miss my own home."

Harry tried to hide the disappointment from his face, and nodded.

Remus asked, "What will you need to do to shut down your home here?"

"Empty the refrigerator, I suppose, and lock up good. That's probably enough. I don't have any plants to give away."

"I need to leave on the morning of Friday 20 August. I will also need to be gone for parts of next Wednesday and Thursday, to go get my potion. Could you stay at the Grangers that Friday night?"

"I think so...Remus?"

“What?”

“Where are my parents buried?”

This was not a question that Remus was expecting. Harry had never asked about where his parents had been buried. “Not too far from Neville’s Grandmother’s house in Kent? Would you like to go there tomorrow?”

“Could we?”

Realization hit, and Remus felt bad for his friend. “Sure. Maybe you would like to bring Hermione along? I take it that you have never been there?”

“No. I’m embarrassed to say that I haven’t even thought about it for years.”

“Don’t be. We’ll leave as soon as she comes over.”

The drive over the next day was anxiety filled for Harry. He somehow hoped that he would measure up to his parent’s expectations. They got to the property, and walked a ways until they found the marker under a tree very similar to the one that Harry had seen in Snape’s pensive. He pictured James playing with a snitch. The Marker read James and Lilly Potter. Good friends, Loving parents. There were date of births and deaths. It occurred to Hermione that they must have been married right out of school. She held Harry tightly. They walked around the wooded grounds past the stream that ran alongside the trees for half an hour. There was no one else there. Remus showed them where the Potter cottage once stood. “This is where it was. No one has built here since.”

Hermione asked, “I wonder who owns the property now?”

Remus replied, “I don’t know. Harry, did you ever hear back from Griphook?”

“No. I was going to stop in and see him a couple of weeks ago. I guess that I got distracted.” Harry gave Hermione a wink. She hugged him. Harry conjured two yellow roses, and placed them on the ground in front of the headstone.

Hermione looked surprised at what she had just seen. “Harry, when did you learn to conjure roses?”

“Just something that I was practicing.”

“Oh.”

Remus found a moment to say, “If you’re ready now, we should go.”

On the way back Harry asked Remus if he was planning on going to the joke shop re-opening.

“Yes. I believe that almost everyone from the Order will stop by.”

“Harry replied, “Excellent. I will stop by Gringotts and see Griphook that day too.”

On Monday fifteen minutes before the scheduled re-opening of their shop, George looked out the window. “Merlin Fred! There must be five hundred people out there.” Molly, Ginny, Ron, Luna, and Neville had been recruited to stock the shelves, tag items, and the other tasks associated with retail. They must have received two or three hundred owls from people wishing them well. Many of them had orders for items to be sent owl order. Ginny, Molly, and Neville were working at filling those orders. Fred and George opened the doors and walked out. Fred talked to the crowd as best he could. “Thank you for coming to our re-opening. We want to thank Auror Nymphadora Tonks and Harry Potter for saving us, along with the mediwitches, wizards and others who came to our aid two weeks ago. Without their help, we wouldn’t be here. Thank you. Please come in, have a butterbeer and a biscuit.” Molly had apparated over to the Leaky Cauldron, and bought every butterbeer that Tom had in stock.

The day was fabulous. They sold out almost every item that they had in stock, and took orders for half again more. Rita and Bozo took pictures, assuring them of another front-page story in the Prophet. Deep down, both Fred and George knew that Harry was responsible for the majority of their success.

After a half hour of saying hello to people that he didn't know, Harry and Hermione made their way over to Gringotts. Harry had spent most of the 5,000 galleons that he had taken out of his account a month ago, and wanted to make another withdrawal. He still had about 15,000 pounds left after furnishing his flat, and buying everything that he needed over the summer. Hermione knew that he had spent a lot of money over the summer, and the equivalent of 55,000 pounds was a lot of money. On the other hand she remembered looking in his closet at Privet Drive and seeing only rags. So what if he had done a bit of catching up? They visited his vault before going to see Griphook. The enormity of his wealth crept into Hermione's conscious. Harry had never really told her that he had given half of his money away within hours of having received it. They withdrew 2,000 galleons, and got back in the cart to go see Griphook. He was waiting at his door for them, and showed them in. "Ms. Granger, Mr. Harry, it is good to see both of you again. Please sit down."

"Thank you, Griphook."

"You had asked me to look into your parent's estate and any Will that they may have left. It turned out to be something of a complex matter. There were three parts, the Potter Trust, your parent's personal estate, and the trust that they had set up for you. While the ownership of the Potter trust is not disputed, the control is somewhat more complex. To a lesser degree, the same could be said for your parents' estate. The Potter trust was most recently in the direct control of your grandfather. Control would have been granted to your father had he reached the age of twenty-five. Unfortunately, he never did. As his direct heir, the same would apply to you. The Potter trust consists of direct ownership and partial ownership of some properties, businesses, and other secure long-term investments. At this point, it is under institutional control, and not really a concern for another nine years."

Griphook continued, "Your parent's estate is somewhat simpler. Your Godfather, Sirius Black was the primary trustee of the estate. You of course are the sole named heir of the estate. The estate includes a forty-acre property in Kent and some cash and investments in a vault. At one time, it probably was equivalent in size to the Black estate that you and Mr. Lupin inherited earlier this year. The loss of the building fifteen years ago diminished the value somewhat, but the property itself has substantial value. That property can be titled to you now, as well as the contents of the vault. I will send you a detailed inventory of either or both accounts if you wish." Harry indicated that he would like the contents of his parent's vault inventoried, and sent to him before he left next Saturday. Griphook asked Harry if he would like the same distribution made for this account documented in his Will as his original account. Harry nodded. Griphook asked them to wait for a few minutes while he had the paperwork drawn up. Harry signed the documents, and they were on their way.

While Harry was at Gringotts, Professor Dumbledore had gone to see Director Bones. Percy knocked on the door. "Professor Dumbledore is here to see you."

"Show him in, Percy."

"Good morning, Professor."

"Yes. It is a lovely day. I've come to talk with you about Voldemort. It is my belief that with his recent setbacks he will look elsewhere for his followers. Most likely, he will attempt to persuade the dementors that he will offer them much more freedom than the Ministry. I believe it critical that the prisoners currently residing in Azkaban be moved elsewhere and the dementors dismissed. I believe that he will make his move in one or two days. I apologize for not being able to provide more notice."

Amelia was in awe of this man. "Thank you for your insight, Professor. I will request that Minister Fudge come down. I need his approval to permanently move a prisoner who has been sentenced."

“Percy. Please have Minister Fudge come down. It is a matter of some urgency.”

Fudge arrived a minute later. “Amelia. You look lovely today. How nice to see you again.” He noticed Dumbledore and the flirty smile vanished from his face. “Dumbledore. What are you doing here?”

“I have come to warn you of an impending breakdown of the Azkaban prison system. I believe that Voldemort will soon make his move to get the dementors on his side. I do not believe that we can stop it from happening. We can, however put the thirty or so prisoners who currently reside on Azkaban Island elsewhere. I recommend splitting them into several groups, so they do not represent as tempting of a target. I recommend placing them in the country’s private prisons after their areas have been warded against apparation or portkey use.”

“Absolutely not Dumbledore. I told you over a year ago that the public won’t stand for it.”

Dumbledore said evenly, “I will observe that if you do nothing, you will be out of office, dead, or both by the end of the week.” He got up to leave.

Fudge looked like he had been punched in the stomach. “Dumbledore, wait... Are you certain of this?”

“Yes. Amelia, how many holding cells are there?”

“Ten. I think that each could hold three at least people on a temporary basis. Minister, it is within my authority to bring a prisoner back for up to thirty days for additional interrogation. I am exercising that authority for all of the prisoners at this time. After two weeks, we can evaluate the situation and either return them, switch the guards, or disburse them, as Professor Dumbledore has recommended.”

Dumbledore spoke. “Cornelius, you may survive politically if the dementors leave the Ministry’s service. You wouldn’t if there was a massive jailbreak. As such, no one must know that the prisoners

were returned here. You must not mention it to anyone. I can not stress the importance of this enough.”

Amelia cancelled all leaves and within a half hour had rounded up sixty of the Aurors, almost the entire department. They were assembled, and were on the boats that would take them to Azkaban Island. Three hours later, the Ministry holding cells were full. By the next morning, Azkaban Island was deserted. The dementors had almost all left to join Voldemort on Skye Island in Northwest Scotland.

The next day the pair of Aurors assigned to check the status of the island found it to be deserted. Amelia Bones sat at her desk marveling at Dumbledore’s insight. He had predicted within hours an event that was previously considered unthinkable.

Fudge did not survive politically. Within an hour of the announcement of the dementor desertions a partition of no confidence had been circulated, and by noon Fudge had been removed from office. Both Dumbledore and Bones had been approached to take the position. Dumbledore and Bones both suggested similar alternative choices. Amos Diggory was named Minister of Magic, and Arthur Weasley was named undersecretary. This left the Order well represented within the government.

Harry was spending every waking moment that he was not with Hermione studying. He had read through the sixth year transfiguration, and charms books. He was able to do most of the charms, and much of the transfiguration. Not really having the setup for potions, he at least read through the first half of the books. By Thursday, he thought that he was ready. He had packed his trunk, and sent it over to Hermione’s. He thanked Remus for spending the summer with him. They locked the doors and Harry rode his motorcycle to the Grangers. Dan had said that Harry could keep it in their garage for the school year. Emma was home for the afternoon. Hermione had gone to the grocery store for a few minutes.

"Hello Harry. Come in." She smiled at him and handed him a Coke and led him to the back garden.

"Hi Emma. Thank you. How are you?"

"Fine Harry. Did you enjoy your summer?"

"I'm not sure that enjoy is the right word. I survived it. My life changed a lot. I fell in love. I acquired a lot of money. I met some really nice people. I grew up. I killed two people. Do you see what I mean?"

Emma smiled sadly. "I think so. I'm really glad that you and Hermione have gotten to... I think I'm trying to say welcome to the family, Harry. We're glad that you're here."

"Thank you Emma."

"What would you like for dinner tonight?"

"I'd like whatever your favorite dish is. How could I help?"

"You don't need to. If you want to do something, you could set the table for four."

"I'm happy to help. Emma?"

"What is it dear?"

"I just wanted to say thanks for all of your help and concern this summer. You're the kind of person I always envisioned my own mother would have been like."

Emma smiled at him, meeting his emerald eyes. "Thank you Harry. I can't think of a nicer thing that you could have ever said. Spend some time with Hermione. I think she's home now."

Friday the Gringotts owl arrived. True to Griphook's word, Harry's parent's estate was about the size of the Black family estate. Harry

was only mildly interested in the numbers. He told Emma, "For normal life is there really any difference between having one million galleons or three million? I don't need that much stuff. For good or bad, I grew up without having much of anything. I like the stuff that Hermione bought me the best. I don't need a hundred different sets of robes in my closet or a huge house. I don't know or really even care about the Potter family trust. Nine years is a long time from now, and a lot can happen." He was more interested in the inventory listing that said 'and some miscellaneous personal items.' He really didn't have anything of his parents other than his father's invisibility cloak and a few photos that friends had given him.

Hermione's mother offered to take him to Diagon Alley to go have a look. The three of them got in the car. The ride up was quiet. Harry was in an introspective mood again. Emma and Hermione could sense it. They let him be. Emma offered to wait in the Leaky Cauldron, as Harry's finances really weren't her business. Harry insisted that she come along. Emma had been in the lobby at Gringotts before. Since they didn't have an account there had she never been down to the vaults. Harry picked up the account key from Griphook who took them to the vault. Emma had never seen anything like it in her life. Between the cart ride, the tunnels and the sudden bursts of light that Hermione said was dragon fire, the ride was amazing! They got to the vault, and Harry gave Griphook the key. The enormous piles of galleons dumbfounded Emma. Harry had seen his own vault before he had given half of his money to Tonks, so there really was no surprise. She said "It's one thing to say that you have several million pounds in your account, it's something else to see a pile of five pound notes that's as tall as you!"

Harry's attention moved to the seven-lock trunk that was in the vault. It was very similar to the ones that he had purchased for himself and Hermione. It shrunk the same. He charmed it to be light, picked it up, and put it into his robes pocket. Griphook asked him if he needed anything else. Harry asked him to transfer the account balance into his own vault. They took the cart back up to the lobby. Harry thanked Griphook for his help, and signed the account transfer document. He also thanked him for his help with the Sirius Black trust fund disbursements. Griphook replied, "We wish you well, Mr. Potter."

On the way back, Emma commented that it was a good thing that Professor Dumbledore had arranged for Harry to take a business finance course. Harry incorrectly commented that since lots of wizard families probably had similar situations, he was surprised that it wasn't a standard course. Hermione had never had any reason to think of Harry as a wealthy individual before. She was glad that the news that he was hadn't seemed to change him. Emma announced that she and Dan had been invited to friends for dinner, and the kids would have to fend for themselves that evening. Harry offered to order pizza to get delivered, as it wasn't something that they served at Hogwarts. Dan and Emma left at 6:30 and said that they would be home around midnight. Hermione snuggled up to Harry, and they sat quietly for a while holding each other. Hermione repeated her offer. Harry snogged her breathless, drew on all of his self-control and said that they should wait until the Christmas holiday. He didn't want to violate her parent's trust in him by sneaking around with their daughter in their home. Hermione made a comment about what Harry could expect to find under his Christmas tree this year. They spent a very enjoyable evening snuggled up on the couch watching a movie.

Harry got up first on Saturday. He finished packing his trunk, and went to make coffee. An owl was waiting outside the window for him. It had the note from Dumbledore along with a portkey that would activate when tapped with a wand. He made breakfast for everyone. Dan and Emma wished him a very good year. Hermione kissed him good luck. At nine, he brought his things out to the back garden and told Hedwig to fly to the Owlery at Hogwarts. Harry had shrunk both trunks and put them in his robes. He shook Dan's hand, hugged Emma, kissed Hermione, touched the portkey and vanished.

He arrived at Hogsmede station, and began the walk to the castle. Fifteen minutes later, he arrived at the castle. Professor Dumbledore greeted him. "Professor Potter, come in. Allow me to be the first to welcome you to Hogwarts in your new role. I will show you to your quarters. He took Harry past the kitchens and down a hall that Harry had not been to. Yours is number sixteen. You can set the password for your door by saying "Professor Potter sets the password to be," followed by whatever you like. Students are normally not allowed

down here, but we shall make an exception for your good friends. Please continue to exercise good judgment with regards to Miss Granger. Should you require anything, I am certain that Dobby or Winky would be more than happy to accommodate you. I am also certain that they will want to ask you sometime during the year about staying with you next summer and beyond. You of course have my blessing. The current password to my office is Canary Creams. You are welcome at anytime. There will be an Order meeting tonight at eight. Meals are available in the great hall at the normal times.” He smiled and said, “You know where the kitchens are should you want something outside of the normal hours. I would ask you to eat at the staff table during the week.”

He continued. “Please set your living quarters up as you wish. Your tutoring sessions will begin tomorrow. Decorum states that you would address the other staff members as Professor in front of the students, or as you feel comfortable other times. After hours we are all on a first name basis. If you have your door open, expect company to come by. If you have it closed, you can be assured that your colleagues will respect your privacy, except for urgent situations. You will be paid on the last day of the month, either deposited into your account, or in cash as you prefer. Minerva is responsible for those details. Please look into your classrooms. Alastor will be by tomorrow for part of the day. Let Minerva know whatever you would require. Our budget is not unlimited, but we will try to provide whatever you request. What questions can I answer for you?”

“Professor, do you know of any ways to kill a dementor?”

“You have asked a very timely question Harry, whether you knew it or not. I have considered transfiguration and transportation as possible methods. During most of my lifetime, wizards and dementors have had an acceptable co-existence. It is possible that a sufficiently strong Patronus charm might permanently damage them. The dementors will be the subject of the Order meeting tonight. You have more experience with them than most, so allow yourself to take an active role in the discussion.”

“Professor, what is in the trunk that my parents left me?”

“To be completely honest, I don’t know. There were of course some household items left intact after your parent’s home was destroyed. Hagrid had put those things in the large compartment of your father’s seven-lock trunk. Hagrid did not look through the other compartments. I did not mention the other Gringotts account since Sirius was the trustee and you had barely begun able to touch the funds that your parents had set for your school account. With respect to the Potter family trust, you do own some very nice properties in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, and in the States. You own investments in some businesses. They are not important at the moment.”

Dumbledore continued. “Harry, I do owe you an apology. I had rather hoped that when placing you in the care of your aunt, a loving relationship would have developed. I had hoped that they would have taken to you like the Grangers or Dr. Turnbull did. Once you had been placed, I lost much of the right to interfere with their methods. They did keep you alive, and you are the most solidly grounded young man of your age that I have known. Contrary to Severus’ claims, I know that you do not walk around with a princely sense of entitlement, like young Draco did. Harry, I would give you some advice on the next subject if I possessed it, but I don’t. You will face many challenges in the coming year. Not least among them is maintaining your friendships with the students. Filius and Alastor may have good advice for you. They both rose very quickly in their careers. Of course you should also listen carefully to the advice given to you by Miss Granger. She is rarely wrong, and has your best interest in mind.”

“With respect to your morning schedule during the year, I apologize for the timing, but there are other schedules to dovetail with. Your day will normally start at six for personal physical training.

Nicolas will be by to help you from nine until noon on Mondays.

I will help you from nine to noon on Tuesdays.

Someone from Gringotts will be by from eight until ten on Wednesdays.

Various Ministry Aurors will work with you on Thursday and/or Friday mornings depending on their schedule.

Minerva has additionally offered to help you with Apparation, Advanced topics, and Human Transfiguration on weekends at times that you two arrange.

From 7:00 until 9:00 PM you will have sessions with the various staff on their subjects:

Transfiguration – Monday

Charms – Tuesday

Potions – Wednesday

Self study - Thursday

Healing - Friday

“Much of what you would have covered in your sixth year will be presented to you in the next few weeks. I would expect to be done with that by mid October, and get through seventh year sometime in January. Afterwards, you will have the opportunity to work on the truly advanced topics. You do not need to go at the same pace with each subject. Ultimately you will set the pace.”

“Harry, I believe that I have taken enough of your time for one morning. Please take the time to get settled in. If I do not see you see you sooner, I will see you tonight at eight in my office.”

“Thank you, Professor.”

Harry had lunch that day with Minerva. They talked about regular things, establishing their new relationship. She was very interested in the work that Dr. Turnbull did. Harry said that she would likely come to the first Quidditch match, and invited her to join them.

Harry asked her opinion of Fudge leaving office. She said “If he had been open-minded a year ago, we might have had Voldemort on the

ropes and possibly out of the country six months ago. Without your actions, he probably still would be lurking around unnoticed, placing his followers in positions of authority.”

Minerva asked Harry about his home. “It is a good fit for me. I don’t miss having a garden to tend. I’ve done that for much of my life. Remus was very kind to stay with me.”

Minerva smiled at the young man. “Harry, there was a long, long list of volunteers for that spot. There are a lot of people who really care for you.”

“It is nice to have things to wear that actually fit.”

“Harry, I apologize about that. We didn’t know what to do. No one wanted to embarrass you by drawing attention to your cousin’s oversized muggle clothing. The only times we did much was when Poppy would mend and resize the things that you wore into the hospital wing during your somewhat frequent visits. I must say however that your current attire looks fabulous on you. Whoever picked out your current things has excellent taste.” She winked at him over her half rim glasses.

She continued. “Harry, on a personal matter, and if I overstep, please say so. I want to thank you for making the wizarding world a safer place this summer. I also want to thank you for your work in establishing the Sirius Black trust fund. It is an exceptionally right thing to do. I have a tremendous amount of respect for both of you. It is a wonderful legacy to give to Sirius. Thank you.”

“Prof...Minerva, I’m not proud of killing those people. I won’t be proud of killing anyone in the future, regardless of the circumstances. I do understand what you meant. You’re welcome.”

Minerva looked at him with increased respect. He was right. He would kill again, protecting someone else. “I for one am honored to know you, Harry Potter. I must confess, I do read the articles about you in Teen Witch Weekly, and you probably are aware that at least half of the young witches in this school have posters of you on their walls. I,

of course do not.” She had succeeded in lightening the conversation, even to the point of his laughter.

“Well, better me than Voldemort.” They both laughed together at the idea of an “evil wizard of the month” calendar.

Harry went back and arranged his things. He hung his Sirius Black wanted poster in his bedroom. He decided to wait on the other trunk until Hermione could be there. He had been assigned his own classroom. Since it was to be used for the practical portion of defense, there was not a lot of classroom furniture. It was fitted more along the line of a school gymnasium. Half of the class had gymnastic mat on the floor. The other half was stone. There were whiteboards on the wall for drawing illustrations and some chairs along the walls. Director Bones had sent over a bookshelf full of school age appropriate books that she and the Aurors had gathered when she announced what he would be doing during the year. He did not know it, but almost the entire department had volunteered to help tutor him during the year on various topics.

At ten minutes to eight he found his way to Dumbledore’s office, and gave the password to the gargoyle. He found the side wall of Dumbledore’s office open and a large conference room furnished like a corporate board room. The table was round. Harry sat down. A minute later, he was joined on either side by Director Bones, and Tonks Kingsley, Molly, Arthur, Fred, George, Mundungus, Hagrid, Minerva, Poppy, Alastor, and a dozen others soon joined. Amos Diggory came in with Victor Krum and Molly Malkin, Tom the bartender, and Arabella Figg. Hermione, Severus, and Remus were not present. Dumbledore started off. “There has been a development with the dementors. Amelia will fill us in.” She had been invited as a guest. There were no titles used in the Order meetings. Everyone was on a first name basis.

“Albus, thank you for inviting me. On Monday we moved the Azkaban prisoners to a safer location. A few hours later the dementors that had been residing on the island left. It is our belief that they have gone to join Voldemort, at his invitation. Most of the wizarding world is defenseless against the dementors. Their only real option is to flee at the first sight of them.”

“Thank you Amelia. Your assessment is doubtless correct. Most of the wizarding world is indeed unprepared for such an attack. We need to develop strategies on several levels – ordinary citizen awareness, organized defense in the event of a large scale attack, and the destruction of the dementors.”

Victor spoke up. “Everyone knows that there is no defense against more than a few dementors other than apparition. Most people are so shook up, they splinch themselves. Children are defenseless.”

Amos spoke. “I tried to fight one once. It was the worst experience of my life.”

Arabella replied, “Harry beat two at once last summer.” A few people looked at him, having heard the story. Harry said nothing.

Hestia spoke. “No one can fend off more than one or two at a time. What if a dozen attacked at once?”

“I fought off over a hundred one time.” The room fell absolutely silent. If it hadn’t been for some of Harry’s more recent exploits, few would have believed him. “Sirius, Hermione, Ron and I were attacked by the lake in my third year.”

Molly Malkin said, “Well I suppose that it is possible that the four of you might have held them off for a few seconds.”

Harry shook his head. “I fought them myself. The others were unconscious or on stretchers. I chased them all away.”

Dumbledore stepped in. “Harry is of course telling the truth. He used the Patronus charm. Few wizards or witches even know of the spell. Fewer still are able to cast it, perhaps one in a hundred. Of those who can, perhaps half are able to cast it in a moment of need. It takes incredible mental focus. Who here can cast a corporeal Patronus?” Only Harry, Moody, Dumbledore, Tonks, Minerva, Fred, and George raised their hand.

Fred spoke. “Harry taught George and I last year!”

Arthur asked, "Harry is this true?"

Harry nodded. "I think I was able to get four people to get a fully defined shape last year before... the lessons had to stop."

Dumbledore spoke. "Perhaps Harry would be able to help some of us sometime. The need is urgent, but now is not the time. Amelia, how many dementors do you estimate were on the island?"

"About two hundred."

Dumbledore asked the Ministry people to identify any sightings and try to finalize a count of who could cast the charm. He asked Harry to begin teaching the charm to as many as he could. He asked Kinglsey to give Harry a schedule of topics that he should study.

Dumbledore thanked them all for coming. Dobby and some of the house elves brought, coffee, tee, butterbeer, and trays of small sandwiches.

They visited for a while after the meeting had adjourned. Amelia was watching Harry. The pieces were falling in place. He obviously was a very powerful wizard based on what he had done to Lestrage. She had tried producing a Patronus herself. The depth of mental focus that he had must be immense. Merlin, to produce a Patronus that would actually drive a hundred of those horrors away was incredible. It was almost beyond her comprehension that he did it at age thirteen. Dumbledore really had found an apprentice. She kept watching him.

Tonks went up to Harry and gave him a hug. She talked to him for a minute, handed him an envelope and kissed him on the cheek. Lucky kid. Lucky girl. Her grand niece Susan had posters of Harry on her wall since she was eleven.

An old man that she did not know walked up to him with Dumbledore. She saw Dumbledore subtly cast a silencing charm around them. Dumbledore made the introductions. They shook each other's hand and chatted for a minute. The old man patted Harry on the shoulder and disappeared. She had never seen anyone Disapparate within the

grounds before. To her knowledge, it wasn't supposed to even be possible.

Amos Diggory walked up to Harry and shook hands. They talked for a minute. Diggory had none of the pomposity of his predecessor. She remembered the story of Harry being present at the rebirth of Voldemort, and that he had somehow brought back Amos' son's body back. Fudge had told the story implying that it was a load of dung. Amos obviously didn't share that opinion.

Arthur Weasley's wife came up to Harry and hugged him like a mother. If the stories were true, he had saved her daughter, three of her sons and her husband's lives at different times. They certainly were not the only ones here who owed him a life debt. Fletcher, Jones, and Tonks did at a minimum.

One of the house elves appeared, an odd little fellow wearing yellow short pants mismatched socks and a purple knitted sweater. He walked up to Harry and hugged him. Harry squatted down on his knees and greeted the elf like he was an old friend. She wondered what Harry had done to get a school house elf to display such overt loyalty?

Hagrid came up to Harry, again with an attitude bordering on reverence. She had heard stories of his actions proving Hagrid innocent and having him freed from Azkaban. There was even talk that he had slain a forty-foot basilisk when he was twelve years old. She would have thought it another load of dung if the teller of the tale hadn't been Arthur Weasley himself.

Dumbledore walked up to her. Having noticed her interest in Harry, both tonight and over the summer, he said, "He is quite a fine young man isn't he?"

"Yes. I was just considering how many people in this room he has been involved with."

"To answer one of your questions, if it involved bravery, a good deed or rescuing someone, than yes, the story is true. He has been battling Voldemort and his forces on a regular basis since he was eleven.

Thank you for coming tonight Amelia, especially on such short notice. Your insight is always very useful. Thank you again."

Harry made his way over to her. "Hello Amelia. Do you know if there are other dementors in Britain than the ones that had been on the island?"

She smiled at him. He had asked the very question that she had pondered that afternoon. "Hi Harry. I don't think anyone really knows. To be honest we know precious little about them."

"Do you know a way to kill a dementor?"

"Not personally. I will ask a colleague of mine in the Department of Mysteries. Why do you ask?"

"Using a Patronus is a bit like stunning a Death Eater in a group. They keep coming back. We wouldn't put dementors on trial per say, would we?"

"No. Given their defection to Voldemort's side, it really comes down to a shoot on sight situation. You are right to consider long-term solutions. Can you really teach people how to produce a proper Patronus?"

"Yes. I would be happy to help you and your department. Can I contact you as I learn my schedule? Perhaps a weeknight could work? Personally, I see two hundred enemy dementors being a lot bigger problem than thirty Death Eaters. The difference is they might not be able to move very fast. I've never heard of one using a portkey or apparating. Perhaps you could ask your friend if they know?"

"Thank you Harry. I won't keep you. Please keep an eye on Susan this year."

"I will. Good night."

Tonks came back to Harry, carrying four butterbeers. "Harry, can we go talk for a while?"

“Sure Tonks. Let’s go for a walk. It’s nice outside.” They walked out of the castle and went up to the astronomy tower.

Harry conjured two comfortable wooden chairs and motioned for Tonks to sit down. “What’s up?”

“I just wanted to be sure that we are still OK.”

“Why wouldn’t we be? What’s this about?”

“Did you open my letter?”

“No. Too many people came up and wanted to talk after the meeting. Should I read it, or can you tell me?”

“I wrote you a Gringotts draft for half of the money that you gave me. I would like you to keep it for yourself, give it to Hermione, or use it for your victims trust fund.”

“Why are you doing this? I gave that money to you.”

Harry, I can’t begin to describe how much what you did means to me. It was just too much money for me.

Harry understood what she was trying to tell him, and nodded. “I’ll hold the draft. If the trust fund needs it within a year, I’ll deposit it. If not, we’ll do something else with it. OK?”

“OK. Harry, I never did properly thank you for saving my life.”

“That’s not true. He winked at her. “We held hands for almost an hour. Seriously Tonks, I don’t really understand this wizard’s debt thing. I didn’t do anything for you that you wouldn’t have done for me. I value your friendship too much to murk it up. I really need a slightly older sister to talk with from time to time. I don’t want to ruin anything between us.”

“Thank you, loverboy. Just for the record you realize that you just turned down any woman you could...never mind. Thanks Harry. No

other guy has ever treated me with that level of respect. All I can say is that Hermione is one lucky witch.”

“No. I’m the lucky one. She sees me, and she loves me anyway.”

“Harry, within a few years, a lot of people will just see you or the man that you’ve come to be. You may be famous, or have saved the world, or be a celebrity. Who knows? Whatever happens, it will be for the things that you’re doing in your life, not what happened when you were one.”

Harry heard a noise and turned his head. It was Dumbledore. “I’m sorry to intrude, but we lock the castle doors at midnight during the holidays. I did not mean to interrupt you two.”

They all walked down the stairs together. “Miss Tonks, you are more than welcome to stay the night. If you need guest quarters...”

“Thank you Professor. I was just leaving. Good night professor. Good night Harry.” She walked out the front door and portkeyed home.

“Harry. I did not mean to intrude into your personal life or imply that there is some type of bed check. I simply wanted to avoid having Argus Filch accidentally lock you out.”

“I understand. Good night Professor.”

“Good night Professor.”

Sunday – 18 August – 6:00 AM – Hogwarts

Harry got up early on Sunday and went out for his morning run. After he got back to the castle and had showered, he went down for breakfast. Minerva greeted him, telling him that she had seen him out running, and that she was glad to have him here as a teacher.

She offered to teach him to apparate that morning if he had no other plans. "It would be easier if you got your license before school started." He had read the text that he had been asked to purchase, and with Hermione's help believed that he understood the theory.

They walked to Hogsmede and visited on the way. When they got to Hogsmede station which was deserted at that time of day, Minerva asked Harry to stop. "Harry, I want you to picture yourself over there," she said pointing to a spot twenty feet away. Harry thought about that spot. Nothing happened. He thought harder about that spot. Nothing happened. He thought about standing in that spot. For a split second, he felt warm, then Pop, he found himself standing in that spot.

"Remarkable," said Minerva. "Most seventh years stand here the entire hour on their first lesson and get nothing more than tired feet. If you feel up to it, project yourself back here." Before the words had fallen silent, pop, Harry was standing two feet from her. Like flying, he had found something that he could do effortlessly.

"Can you do it again?"

With only the tiniest of pops, Harry reappeared on the other side of the station. Ten seconds later he was standing next to her, again reappearing almost without a sound.

"Have a biscuit," she commanded, pulling a small tin out of her bag. Remembering the last time that she had told him to have a biscuit, Harry smiled at her, and gladly accepted the cookie from her outstretched hand. "Are you tired?" she asked.

"Thank you...Not a bit. Am I supposed to be?"

“Not necessarily. Everyone is different. A very few come to it naturally. Most can get it with enough work, while about a fourth never master it.”

“Can you picture yourself standing outside the Three Broomsticks? Wait a few seconds. I’ll meet you there.” She apparated across the street from the pub and turned around to watch for him. Without a sound, he appeared outside the doorway. “Brilliant,” she said. “Are you thirsty, or should we go back?”

“I’d be happy to buy you a beverage.” Harry smiled at her. He had developed a handsome facial expression to go along with his brilliant green eyes.

“I’d be delighted Harry.”

He held the door open for her.

“Good morning, Minerva, Mr. Potter.” It was Rosmerta. “What can I get for you on this fine day?”

Harry spoke. “Two butterbeers Rosmerta, and please it’s Harry. Just Harry.”

Minerva marveled at his accomplishment. When she had said that apparation came naturally to a few, she was referring to fractions of a percentage point, not one in five. She had learned over the years, that Harry generally could do things if he didn’t already believe that he couldn’t do them. She began to question to herself, was she looking at a sixteen year old future hit-wizard, or a future Dumbledore?

“Harry, how far did you get in your studies over the holiday?”

“Not as far as I wanted. I ended up spending a lot of time at the ministry. Between the depositions, the hospital visits, and the trials, I kind of got distracted. I didn’t finish potions.”

“Did you get to the section on wandless levitation?” There was no section on wandless levitation.

"I don't think so. Sorry."

"No worries. Perhaps I forgot to send the book. It's not hard really." She took her tin of biscuits out of her bag and gave a quick look around. The pub was deserted, and Rosmerta had gone back into the kitchen to get something. She set the tin down on the tabletop. "Hold your finger out. Point it like your wand, and softly say the incantation to hover the tin six inches in the air."

Harry pointed his finger, giving it the 'Swish and Flick' movement that Flitwick had so carefully taught them years ago. The tin rose just as she had directed. She held out her hand, palm up. Harry gave his finger another wave, and the tin found its way onto her outstretched hand! He beamed at her, his emerald eyes twinkling.

She looked at him carefully, smiled slightly and said, "I knew that you wouldn't have any problem with it. I'm sorry that I forgot to send the book."

"No problem. Would you like another butterbeer?"

"No. Thank you Harry. Why don't you bring a few back with you?"

"Good idea." He bought a case from Madam Rosmerta, and paid their bill.

"OK. For extra practice, why don't you levitate them back to Hogwarts as we walk along." For good measure, she quietly put an unbreakable charm on the bottles when he wasn't looking. For fifteen minutes he levitated the wooden case in front of him as they walked. They were nearly to the castle when Harry said that he was getting tired.

"Just set them down dear." The case lowered itself to the ground. She spent a minute talking with him about the potential Quidditch players on the different house teams and their prospects.

"Are you ready to continue, or would you rather just carry them?"

"I can manage." He waved his hand again and the bottles floated a few feet in front of them. He set them down at the castle steps. "Maybe I should just carry them from here."

Pop. Dobby appeared. "Harry Potter sir. I will help you." Dobby hugged Harry, picked up the case (which seemed almost as big as he was) and with another pop, disappeared.

"Perhaps you want to finish unpacking Harry. We can resume our review at one in my classroom." She pointed him to the staff quarters.

She made her way to Dumbledore's office. "Good morning Minerva, you seem flushed. Is everything all right?"

She sat down and took off her hat. "I've had quite a shock this morning Albus. I took Harry to Hogsmede station to talk with him, and see if he might get some kind of a start with apparation. He mastered it on his first try. By his third attempt, he could do it quieter than I can."

Dumbledore looked at her over his glasses. "Really? That's good news. You might use the rest of the holiday to teach him something else."

She held her gaze on him. "I'm not finished. We stopped in the Three Broomsticks to have a butterbeer and say hello to Rosmerta. I pulled out my tin of biscuits and he could wandlessly levitate them."

"Extraordinary. How long could he keep them floating?"

"That's the point. Without any effort, he floated the tin right into my hand. I had him purchase a case of butterbeer bottles, and he floated them to within a hundred yards of the castle steps as we walked along holding a conversation. I've only seen a handful of people who could do it at all, let alone as casually as if they were walking a dog. He must have had them afloat for twenty minutes."

"Really? Does he know the rarity of that ability?"

“No. I mentioned doing it in passing after he had mastered the apparation so quickly. I told him that I must have neglected to send him the text over the holiday.”

“Was he exhausted afterwards?”

“I don’t think so. I suggested that he go back to his room to finish unpacking.”

“I’ll find a reason to go see him in a few minutes. Did he mention being able to do anything else?”

“He said that he had not finished his potions work. I now take that to mean that he believes that he got through the sixth year work in the other courses.”

“He may have. I believe that he had conjured two rather nice wooden chairs last night. When did you tell him that you would resume?”

“In an hour and a half.”

“Minerva, perhaps you could test him on conjuring objects of varying textures and densities. He did not vanish them last night. I think I’ll have a look to see if they are still there. Would you care to join me?”

“Of course.”

They walked up to the astronomy tower. The chairs were still there. It was quite unusual that a conjured object would last more than a few hours. It was all but unheard of from a student. They still looked show room new, with the proper texture.

Minerva spoke. “I wonder if he owns furniture like this, or simply imagined them?”

“I’m not sure, but I think I will set these in one of the unused classrooms, to see how long they would last.”

“You’re sure that he did not transfigure them from something?”

“No. I’m not positive, but it is unlikely that he found anything to use. It was dark when he went up here to have a conversation with Miss Tonks.”

Minerva looked at him sharply.

“She was fishing and he was not drawn to the bait. When I arrived, she was extolling his qualities as a gentleman. Miss Granger has nothing to worry about. Amelia granted him a Use of Magic license about a month ago. I should ask Remus what it is that they practiced. If you have the opportunity this afternoon, try the ice bucket test. It is NEWT level, but he might be able to get it. I’ll contact Smith at the apparation board and let Amelia know that he is ready to pass his exam, and take him over tomorrow.

“He certainly has turned into a handsome young man. Knowingly or not, he flashed me a smile this morning that would have had half the witches in the school waving their knickers at him. That and word of his wealth is bound to slip out at some point. That leaves him good looking, charming, famous, amazingly talented, and now he’s fabulously wealthy too. I wish I had a granddaughter to set him up with.”

“Amelia may have that in mind herself. I don’t think he has any idea about his true wealth. Somehow he found out about his parent’s estate over the summer. He asked and I mentioned the existence of the Potter family estate in general terms. I do not believe that he will take advantage of anyone. It is not in his nature. Besides, I am certain that Miss Granger will do what she can to dissuade any overly aggressive young witches. He furnished his flat quite modestly and with exceptional taste.”

At one Harry entered McGonagall’s classroom with his various books in his bag. She went through some OWL level review. He did everything very satisfactory. Some of the difference was in interpretation. She asked him to change a rock into a plate. He made a serving platter, she had in mind a dinner plate. It was obvious that he had mastered it on an everyday use basis.

They got to conjuring. She asked him to create a flower for Hermione. He had been practicing them, and created a dozen long stem yellow roses. The petals were perfect, and the scent absolutely correct. Harry created a glass vase, used his wand to jet some water into the vase, placed the flowers in it, smiled, and handed it to Minerva. "For your desk, Professor."

She smelled them, and smiled. "Thank you Harry."

She brought out an ice bucket, half filled it with water, and placed an unopened bottle of butterbeer in it. "Harry, I'd like you to freeze the water into ice cubes without freezing the butterbeer." Harry thought about what she wanted for a few seconds, waved his wand and muttered "Conjurus. The ice looked like the pub ice that was served in the Black Dog. There had been more water in the bucket than what had been needed for the ice cubes. Harry had taken that into account and filled the bucket to the correct level. He also had conjured two half pint glasses.

She brought out another bucket and set up the test a second time. "Now try it without your wand." Harry looked at the water level, waved his hand, and the second bucket was looking identical to the first.

"Excellent. Now if you would, please conjure up a pepperoni pizza."

"Thin or thick crust?"

"Your choice."

Harry thought for almost a minute, and waved his hand in a sideways wave. In front of McGonagall appeared a table, two chairs, plates, flatware, a pizza pan and a steaming hot thin crust pepperoni pizza. The pizza had even been sliced.

"May I join you?" It was Professor Dumbledore. He conjured up a third chair, another plate and flatware.

"This is very good furniture Harry. Where did you see it?"

“Hermione’s mother took me furniture shopping at Harrods over the holiday. I almost bought this table rather than the one that I purchased. The flatware is the kind that I bought, so I had seen that quite a bit. The pizza is the kind that Hermione likes. The pizza shop is a few blocks from her parent’s home.”

Minerva spoke. “Harry made these wandlessly in one pass.”

Dumbledore nodded an affirmation at Harry. “Well done Harry. Conjuring multiple objects takes a good eye for detail. What differences did you notice when transfiguring the ice with your wand and without?”

“I had to focus a little harder wandless, but had better control. It was a lot easier not to freeze the bottle wandlessly.”

Dumbledore poured the bottle into a glass and handed it to Harry. He tossed the bottle into the air. It hit the floor and smashed. “If you would Harry, please clean up the spill without your wand.”

“Would you like the bottle repaired, or the glass vanished?”

“Both if you please, in that order.”

“Accio glass said Harry waving his finger at the broken bits and pointing to the table. The pieces flew to the table, and landed gently in a pile. “Reparo. The bottle reassembled itself. Harry picked it up, and felt it for smoothness. He handed the bottle to Dumbledore. It was perfect. Dumbledore set the bottle back on the table. Harry waved his hand again, and the bottle vanished.

“Well done Professor,” said McGonagall looking at Harry.

After they ate, Dumbledore conjured a basket of tennis balls. “Let’s continue this next lesson outdoors. The weather is far too nice to sit in a classroom.” They walked outside. Dumbledore stood 25 feet in front of Harry and about the same distance to his left. He tossed one of the tennis balls going from Harry’s left to right. “Harry, the next one that I throw, I’d like you to vanish before it hits the ground. Please

exercise care not to vanish me. Tell me when you are ready, by saying, “throw.” Try it with your wand first if you wish.”

Harry thought for a minute about what he wanted to do, put his wand in his wrist holster, and said, “Throw.”

Dumbledore threw the ball. Harry missed.

“Throw.”

Another ball went flying by until it vanished.

“Throw.”

Harry missed. The ball hit the ground and bounced. Harry thought for a second about what he may have done wrong.

“Throw.”

Gone.

“Throw.”

Gone.

“Throw.”

Gone.

“Throw.”

Gone.

“Throw.”

Gone.

“Harry, next time I will throw two balls.”

“Throw.”

Hit, miss.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Throw.”

Hit, miss.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Let’s take a break. Next time, I will throw one. And Minerva will throw another, only from the opposite direction. Again, pray, do not hit us.”

Harry understood what they were trying to do. He readied himself.

“Throw.”

“Hit, hit.”

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“Throw.”

Hit, hit.

“That is quite enough for today. Harry you did a superb job. You hit most of the targets, and Minerva and I are still here. Next time we will throw the balls without you prompting us. We will work up to multiple unexpected throws from a standing at rest position.”

They visited for a bit while walking back. “Harry you did very well. Remember to write to Miss Granger. I’m certain that she misses you immensely. Please don’t mention any specifics as it relates to your training in the event that Hedwig is intercepted. I have asked Miss Tonks to come and collect you tomorrow at eight. She will bring you to the apparation testing area. If there is anything that you neglected to purchase that you can think of, it might be a good opportunity. Please be back by one in the afternoon, and we will continue with our practices. If you have the opportunity tonight, please review your readings on animal transfiguration. I hope to see you both at dinner. Enjoy the remainder of your afternoons.”

Harry spoke. “Thank you both. I have some letters to write.” Harry went back to his room. He wrote Hermione that he was taking his apparation test tomorrow, and would be done by ten. He hoped that she would meet him at the Ministry, but did not know Emma’s schedule for the day.

He also wrote Neville a letter, telling him that he had started school already, and wishing him a good final two weeks of holiday. He wrote Ron a similar letter, saying that it was good to see him and Luna. He asked Hedwig to deliver Hermione’s first, then Neville’s then Ron’s. “Hermione will give you something to eat. Be careful girl.” He stroked his friend before setting her off on her journey. It occurred to Harry that he could probably call her from Hogsmede station on his cell phone. He certainly could call her from Diagon Alley. He also wrote a note for Remus, and found a school owl to deliver it.

After dinner, he did the reviewing that Dumbledore had suggested. He finished about eight and decided to go for a jog before it got dark.

Monday morning Harry got up and went for another run before six. He had come to view this as much therapeutic as physical exercise. He finished about seven, and took a quick shower. He had time to grab some money, get a bite of breakfast before Tonks came to collect him. Dumbledore had made him a port key to take him to the apparation testing office. There were quite a number of students in the lobby. Harry recognized most of them. Tonks led him into a side room. Amelia Bones was there. "Hello Harry. I don't usually do apparation testing anymore, but I am authorized to test. How many apparations have you made?"

"Six so far."

"Any problems?"

"None yet."

"As long as you maintain your focus, you should not have any problem. Avoid apparation after drinking, or if you are tired. You should stick to apparating to places that you have been for a while. It is much easier to visualize the projection. If you are ready, please project yourself across the room. Excellent. Please project yourself standing next to me. Excellent. Tonks, please project yourself to Miss Granger's back garden. We will give you a minute. If there is a problem, please come back and notify us."

Tonks disappeared. She noticed that Harry was virtually silent when he projected himself. She had him try again going back and forth. There really wasn't more noise than a faucet drip. She was quite impressed, but not really surprised.

"OK Harry, project yourself to Hermione's back yard. Wait a minute, then apparate back to this room."

A minute later, Harry returned. Tonks returned a few seconds later. She nodded, but did not say anything. Amelia signed the certificate, and wished Harry a great day. Tonks told him that she had business to do, and asked him to go back to Hogsmede station on his own.

Amelia spoke after Harry left. "Did he do all right?"

"Yes that wasn't it. I didn't even hear him come. The kid is really smooth."

"I thought the same thing. I tested him here again after you left. I couldn't hear him disappear, and only barely hear him reappear. Was Hermione at her house?"

"No. No one was home."

"Just as well. I will see you again next week Auror Tonks."

"Yes Director Bones. Enjoy your day."

Harry met Hermione and Emma in the Leaky Cauldron. He hugged them both. Hermione asked him how things were going.

"Fine so far, I got my room set up, gone jogging a few times, played tennis with Dumbledore and had a butterbeer with Professor McGonagall."

Hermione knew there was more to the story, but did not press. Emma said that she'd be happy to wait in the pub for an hour if they wanted to do any shopping.

They agreed and went into Diagon Alley. Harry held her hand as they walked. He told her about the Order meeting, and the concern over the dementors. They walked by Quality Quidditch. On a whim Harry ordered Ron a Firebolt that matched his own, and asked that it be sent to him at the joke shop. He wrote a note wishing Ron him the best season. He signed it love, Harry and Hermione. He ordered two more robes of different shades of gray. He also took Hermione to a jewelry store and bought her a matching Rolex Submariner watch. "Next summer if we're ready, we'll buy engagement rings. I love you, Miss Granger."

Hermione soaked in his words, her heart racing. "I love you so much, Mr. Potter. Thank you so much for the watch. I love it!" She looked at

the time and said, "I probably should go now. Mum is waiting. Be careful at school."

They kissed again in the alley between Diagon Alley and the back door of the Leaky Cauldron. Harry told her that he would try calling her from Hogsmede station one evening during the week.

Harry had another hour before he had to get back to school. He transfigured his robes into a grey suit and walked out the front of the Leaky Cauldron. He found an art shop and purchased three framed prints for his room. He found a framed and matted print of a WW 2 submarine that reminded him of the stories that Poppy had told him. He selected an American west print because he liked the picture and the colors. Finally he selected a print of a Triumph motorcycle that looked identical to his own. He liked the colored metal frames. He paid the merchant, had them wrapped and carried them with him back to the alley behind the Leaky Cauldron. He changed his robes back and held the prints in both hands as he apparated onto Hogsmede station.

He floated his prints up to the castle. This time he had no problems. He put them up in his living area. The only other picture that he had was one that he had taken at the Grangers. It had Dan, Emma, Hermione and Harry smiling at the camera. It was a muggle picture. In his bedroom, Harry had several other photos, Hermione alone, Harry and Hermione together, and Harry, Sirius, Hermione, and Lupin. That was his only photo of himself and Sirius. He also had one from third year of himself, Ron and Hermione. Colin must have taken it. Harry missed Hermione immensely, but felt very at home in the castle.

The rest of the week was about the same. He spent most of the day with Minerva, working on progressively harder transfigurations, all wandless. On Saturday morning, he went to Hogsmede with Dobby and Winky. He ignored any funny looks that he might have received. He took them into Madam Malkin's and ordered them each a set of school robes in their size. They really did look good in them. They thanked him profusely. Harry smiled at both of them, and asked them to have a great day. He called Hermione, and talked with her for ten minutes before his battery ran out. There was electricity in the Three Broomsticks. He made a note to come over that night and get his cell

phone battery charged. He purchased a large box of Honeydukes chocolate bars and chocolate frogs to have around when people came by for the school year, and another case of butterbeers.

The next week he spent working with Professor Flitwick and charms. Flitwick worked very well with Harry. He knew that Harry was much less interested in the theory and much more interested in the practice. He literally fell off of his chair when he noticed that Harry was doing the charms without his wand. He called a break for lunch and hurried off to see Professor Dumbledore. "Hello Filius. How is young Harry doing?"

"Doing? He's doing NEWT level charms without his wand! I've only seen one other person perform at a fraction of that level without a wand, and you hired her on the spot. Have you told him that wandless magic at his level is all but unheard of?"

"No. I was hoping that no one would mention it to him until we ascertain about what his ultimate skill level at wandless magics might be. He was doing NEWT level transfiguration last week, a few days after trying wandless magics for the first time. He is amazingly accurate. I had him hitting moving targets with a high degree of success. Please let him guide the lessons where they may go for the week. When school starts, we can ascertain what the best content will be. Have fun with this my friend. It is an opportunity that we are not afforded on a normal basis."

"Let's have some lunch."

After lunch, they continued for another hour. During a break, Harry asked Flitwick if he knew of any ways to kill a dementor. They talked about the Patronus charm, and ways that it might be strengthened. Flitwick mentioned that some wizards' strength could be amplified when casting through a staff. He mentioned that legend had it that Godric Gryffindor had used his sword to cast with. He used a spell testing device to measure Harry casting Stupefy with and without his wand. There was no difference. Harry asked him if that was usual.

"To be honest, Harry, I haven't spent much time strength metering spells. I really don't have an answer for you."

They next day Dumbledore gave Harry Gryffindor's sword. They tried metering the spells again. Harry was at the absolute upper end with spell strength with and without his wand. He tried the same test casting through the sword. The results were nearly off the chart! Dumbledore and Flitwick had rehearsed their response telling Harry that the results were somewhat higher. They told him to keep practicing and that they would try again on Friday. His homework was to blast rocks using the Reducto charm at the old quarry a half mile from the castle. They left him be for the afternoon.

Flitwick mentioned that Harry had asked about ways to kill a dementor.

Dumbledore replied, "I've considered many ways, decapitation, transfiguration and a variation on a Patronus, or casting of the charm from multiple sources. We've really never had a reason to try hurting them before now. Like sharks in the ocean, we know so very little about those creatures. We know next to nothing about their origin, or lifespan." Dumbledore stood up. "I must leave now. I have some business at the Ministry and a bit of shopping to do. I'll see you at dinner. Thank you Filius."

The next day, Harry continued his lessons with Flitwick. Harry asked him about teaching. "I always admired your style. It was never intimidating. You never made anyone feel degraded if they made a mistake."

"Thank you Harry. Realistically, there is only so much intimidation that can be had when you are 3 foot 3. I found the nurturing approach works best for me."

"I never cared about your height."

"I know. That is one of your great qualities Harry. You choose to look past the outsides and see the true essence of someone. You took the time and found the real Hagrid, Dobby, Firenze, Fleur, Tonks, Luna, Griphook, Lupin, and myself. Most people only see the oyster shell, not the pearl inside."

“I understand what you are saying. Most people never get past their fantasy of the boy who lived. They never see Harry. Speaking of Luna, with Marietta gone I hope that she has an easier year. I heard about people hiding all of her stuff.”

Flitwick looked up at Harry and said, “You can probably help her much more than I can. You may wish to casually mention her involvement in the fight at the Department of Mysteries some time. The air has been cleared, so to speak with the removal of various students.”

“I will. Thank you for the advice.”

“I’m positive that you will do well Harry. Try to quickly learn the names and get to know each student. You don’t have to be their friend. They should respect you, but they should never be scared of you. Be certain that you are approachable, and as much as possible treat everyone with equal respect. Students will learn best if they can see a practical application to a topic. That shouldn’t be a problem in your case.”

“Your biggest challenges will likely be Mr. Ron Weasley trying to take advantage of you and staying out of Gryffindor tower.”

Harry understood that Flitwick meant. For all practical purposes, he had quit school and gotten a job. It would never be the same, hanging around the common room.

Friday proved to be interesting. Harry’s practice at blasting rocks had produced results. His spells cast through Gryffindor’s sword averaged half again stronger than with his wand or hand. Dumbledore made arrangements to have Harry tutored in mid-level sword handling.

On Saturday, Dumbledore gave Harry a back holster for his sword. He shrunk it to one quarter size. “Harry, please do not leave the castle without it. In its current size, it could be worn standing or sitting without discomfort, and hardly be noticed. You would want to expand it before using it as a sword.”

“Your classes next week will begin with a resumption of Occlumency. I believe that you will have better results with your new instructor, with much less distress.”

“Thank you Professor. Professor, how is Severus Snape doing?”

Dumbledore looked Harry in the eye and nodded. “Thank you for asking Harry. I am planning on seeing him tomorrow afternoon. I will pass along your greetings and learn of his progress. I believe that this is his best path for the time being. You made a very responsible decision concerning him.”

Harry waited anxiously on Sunday the first of September. He sat thinking of his first trip on the train, meeting Ron, Hermione, Neville, Crabbe, Goyle and Malfoy. It seemed a lifetime away.

The students got off the train and onto the carriages. Five younger Ravensclaws, and Slytherins along with an older Gryffindor noticed the thestrals pulling the carriages for the first time. McGonagall led the first years into the great hall for the sorting ceremony. Most of the eyes of the older students were not on the newest students, rather on the head table. Sitting to the left of Dumbledore was little professor Flitwick. On Dumbledore's right was their favorite professor. Next to him was an Asian gentleman, known only to one student. Next to him was a man that many thought they knew, but only a handful had actually met. Next to Flitwick was a visitor. She was ultimately responsible for keeping all of them safe. Missing was a man that most students either feared and or loathed, regardless of his skill at his craft.

The sorting hat finished its song to the usual round of applause. The mix of new students sorted into the various houses was about the same as most years, 16 to Gryffindor, 18 to Hufflepuff, 17 to Ravenclaw and 15 to Slytherin. Yet something was different.

Professor Dumbledore rose, and the students as one became silent. “Good evening. Before we begin our lovely feast, I wish to welcome you. Welcome new students, welcome back returning students. I do

have a few announcements before we eat, so forgive me. I will try to be brief. It is with great pleasure that I announce some staff changes that I believe will meet each of your approvals. Replacing Severus Snape who has agreed to spend his days researching some critically needed potions at St. Mungo's, I would like to introduce Dr. Wo Pei Chang from the People's Republic of China. Professor Chang has had much previous success teaching and working with students. Dr. Chang will also be acting as head of Slytherin house." The applause was significant, particularly from the returning students.

He continued. "We have made some program changes in the Defense Against the Dark Arts class that should meet your approval – strengthening it due to the activity of Voldemort and his minions. As such, we will continue to spend some time teaching defensive law and theory. I ask you to welcome back Professor Alastor Moody." There was a polite amount of applause. Moody was remembered by some of the older students. A few knew the story of the imposter. Regardless of their experience or knowledge of the man, he did look scary. This Professor at least had the good sense not to wear some ridiculous colored cloak or a turban, just regular wizard wear.

Dumbledore continued. "The board of Governors agreed with our assessment that the practical area of defense should be significantly expanded, and instructed by someone with current practical experience. Accepting this very important position is Professor Harry Potter." The response was unprecedented in anyone's memory! Every one of the students (and the staff) got to their feet applauded and cheered him for more than a minute. No one was clapping louder than Hagrid who had also begun his Hogwarts working career early.

Dumbledore raised his arms to get their attention, and the room quieted again. "Harry has agreed to complete his own studies on an individual basis, and as such will no longer be attending any of the classes here. He has received endorsement of qualification by a unanimous vote of both the school governors and the heads of house – a feat rarely seen in the defense position." The older students laughed. "Please welcome your new instructors and give them your fullest attention. They are among the very best within their respective fields." More applause. "Tuck in." and the serving plates magically filled themselves.

Sitting next to Ron, Ginny, and Hermione, Neville noticed some changes around the room. The Slytherin table was missing most of the sixth year, and Ravenclaw was missing Marietta. People were talking to Luna like they would every other student. Dumbledore hadn't specifically mentioned arrests of the students, Snape, or anything about Umbridge, but their absence was like a breath of fresh air within the school.

After dinner was mostly finished, Dumbledore got up. The student body again grew silent. "I ask you to indulge me for the next few minutes. I have a matter of some importance to share with you. I expect that many of you are familiar with Madam Amelia Bones. Madam Bones is the Director of the Magical Law Enforcement branch of the Ministry of Magic. The Ministry Aurors all report to her. The following announcement is therefore within her jurisdiction."

She stood up. "Good evening. As many of you may know, this last summer was unprecedented in your lifetimes with respect to attacks from Voldemort's supporters, people known as Death Eaters. They have historically gone virtually unchallenged in their path of terror and destruction. Many of you in this school have been victims of these attacks. Would Ginny Weasley, Susan Bones, Hermione Granger, Ericka Smith, Daniel Scott, Tim Bigham, Sally Scott, John Parkinson, Patrick Fletcher, and Ronald Weasley please come forward?" The students walked up and stood on her right as directed.

Bones continued. "Would Mr. Arthur Weasley, Auror Hestia Jones, Mr. Mundungus Fletcher, Dr. Dan Granger, Dr. Emma Granger, Dr. Diane Turnbull, Mr. Fred Weasley, and Mr. George Weasley please come forward?" They entered from the room in back and stood on her left as directed. Minister of Magic, Amos Diggory entered behind them, staying out of the way.

"One of your own has gone a long way to stem the wave of violence. It is with great respect that on behalf the entire wizarding community, I request Mr. Harry James Potter to come forward. Mr. Potter the men women and children standing in front of you owe their lives to your services." Harry walked up and stood beside her. Dumbledore and McGonagall were beaming at him.

Bones continued. "To present this award, I ask Auror Tonks to please come forward."

Tonks looked up into his emerald eyes. "Harry, None of us who are standing in front of you would be here if it was not for your bravery, skill, and quick thinking. I also owe you my life. Your skill and concern for others saved my life and nine of the people up here a month ago today. This was not a random act. The others are here because of a handful of other instances where you placed another's safety ahead of your own. It is with my deepest appreciation that I am able to announce you as the latest member in the most prestigious of wizarding organizations, the order of Merlin – First class!" She placed the award around his neck, and kissed him. The younger female students started giggling until they received a murderous look from McGonagall. Each of the people who Harry had helped came up and shook his hand, hugged, or kissed him.

Amelia spoke for a few more minutes about the attribute of putting other people's need in front of your own. Harry was almost ready to pass out from embarrassment. Several photographers were around. Harry did not want yet another poster hanging on the young witch's walls.

Harry did not like receptions. He did not like being the center of this kind of attention. Yet it was impossible not to feel the love and gratitude that the people in the room felt towards him. This was not a 'public' reception. Only the Order members, heads of houses and the people who had been called up to the stage had been invited. Rita had been invited as Harry's friend, not in her business capacity. He said hello to her. "Thanks for coming Rita. I had no idea that this was in the works."

"Madam Bones called me yesterday about it. They must have been cooking this up for a long time. I've seen the paperwork for the second and third class awards before. They are the size of a book. Congratulations Harry. You deserve it." She looked him in the eye and shook his hand.

“Professor Potter, would you do me the honor of introducing me to some of the people here. I have not met most of them?”

“Certainly, Dr. Chang. Dr. Chang, I would like you to meet my friend, Rita Skeeter. Dr. Chang has agreed to teach Potions this year. Rita is the head writer for the Daily Prophet.” Rita smiled. She knew that Harry had meant what he said about considering her a friend. “Excuse me Rita, Dr, Chang.” Harry went from one person to the next, making introductions, getting his picture taken with them, and visiting. Finally he got to the Grangers. He hugged Diane and Emma, and then shook Dan’s hand.

Emma spoke. “Well deserved Harry. We’re so proud of you.” Colin Creevey took his picture with Hermione, Diane, and her parents.

“Thank you, but as you know, I had a lot of help. Can I show you around the castle after?” He was looking for an excuse to leave. “It’s really a beautiful place.”

“Thank you Harry. Professor McGonagall took us around earlier. You have a busy evening. Stay with your guests.” Emma hugged him again and whispered, “Be careful Harry. We love you.”

“Thanks Emma. I love you and Dan too.” She beamed at him.

“You were quite a good kisser,” observed Fred with a mischievous smile on his face.

“Thanks Fred. You weren’t too bad yourself. Seriously, it’s good to see you both. Can I get you a butterbeer?”

“No. Thanks mate. We brought a bottle of Ogden’s. Would you like some?”

“No thanks. Ogden’s and I don’t get along too well.”

“A wise choice. Harry, we want to thank you for the help that you gave to Ron. He seems to be as good as new.”

“No worries. A friend of mine talked with him. She did all of the work.”

George shook Harry's hand again. "Either way, you set it up. Thanks. Also thanks for helping us get back on our feet so quickly. You set us up good with the Prophet. We're still delivering orders. We brought quite a load with us today to drop off to the kids looking to cause mayhem."

"What I don't know won't hurt me."

"OK. Well, thanks again."

"Congratulations Harry." It was Amos Diggory.

"And to you, sir. It is good to see you again."

"Likewise, Harry. Cedric would have been very proud of you."

"As he would be of you, Sir. I think of him often."

"Keep up the good work, Harry. The world is a safer place because of you." Amos Diggory had none of the phony pomposity that Fudge had. He had also lost the parental competitive edge that he had displayed during Harry's fourth year.

"Thank you Sir." Harry finally found the person he was looking for most of all. "Hi Hermione." He hugged her.

"Oh Harry this is great. I am so proud of you."

"I'd rather be spending a quiet evening with you in my arms."

"That's so sweet. I love you."

"I love you too."

It was time to go. He wanted to be fresh for his own studies, as well as for his students. He thanked everyone for coming, and bid them goodnight.

Logistics dictated that Harry's morning classes were held in his own classroom. Dumbledore came down on Monday morning at nine. With him was the oddly dressed man that Harry had seen a few weeks ago at the Order meeting. "Harry, I would like to reintroduce you to my mentor, Sir Nicholas Flamel. Sir Nicolas, Harry Potter, the next generation's leader of the light forces. Harry, I have asked Sir Nicolas to offer you guidance and council. He will also tutor you in certain subjects of mutual interest. Of particular priority are wandless magics, Occlumency, and Alchemy. I would encourage you to listen carefully, and take good notes. These are lessons that could not easily be replaced. I will leave you two." Dumbledore walked out of the room and quietly closed the door.

Flamel was an exceptionally personable wizard. "Good morning, Harry. First to your questions. It is obvious that I am not dead. I shall be here for another two months on Monday mornings to help you. I will give you lessons, guidance, and opinions based on my rather extensive perspective. The lessons that we cover will be yours to share with others or keep for yourself as you wish. I will not share the content of them with Albus, as I did not share the content of his lessons with his headmaster. Please sit and be comfortable. Take notes now, or use your pensive as you wish."

He continued. "We will start with Occlumency today. The future topics will be yours to guide. Occlumency is a little known technique that can help protect your memories against someone skilled in a mind reading technique known as Legilimency. The secret to a good defense is to have a well organized filing system within your mind. Think of your memories as this bundle of papers. Some of them are school lessons, some memories of young ladies, some sad events, and the like. Some may even be your secret battle plans."

"If I were to toss this bundle of papers in the air then rebundle them together without care regarding their content I would have no organization. As such, I would have a hard time detecting what someone was looking for. There is no sense putting up walls in your mind to keep someone from learning what the weather was yesterday. That information has no strategic value. No, you want to organize your mind so that you can truly guard the critical few. So you will

need to learn to organize your mind, be able to detect when someone is looking for something, and put your best defense in that area.”

“The detection phase is critical. It is sort of like having an insect land on your arm. If you detect it early, you can swat it before it bites you. The blocking part is easy. Here is a manuscript on the subject that I wrote. You can have it.”

He continued. “I will be looking for your memory of where you acquired that handsome timepiece. Please tell me when you feel me in your mind. Raise your hand and I will know. I will start with more overt attempts and work our way to more subtle approaches. Please lower your arm to indicate that you are ready.” While Sir Nicolas never did anything as crude as Snape shouting Legilimens, the first attempt was blatant. Harry raised his hand. “How did you know?” asked Flamel.

“I focused on one thought and felt other thoughts coming up that wouldn’t have on their own.”

“Good. Try again. Please indicate when you are ready.” Again Harry raised his hand after half of a minute. “Good. This time we will try a subtle approach. Again, raise your hand when you feel my presence. Harry are you a fan of Quidditch? I used to play it when I was younger. In my case, that was a very long time ago.” Harry raised his hand.

“Very good. In most cases the attacker will come in by stealth. Only an idiot would point a wand at someone and shout Legilimens.” Harry nodded in agreement. “Thank you for allowing me to help you today Harry. You did very well. In the next lesson we shall discuss how to organize your thoughts and memories. Please read the little manuscript that I wrote before then. I hope to see you here at the same time next week.”

“Thank you Sir Nicolas.”

Nicolas nodded, and disappeared. Harry collected his things and brought them back to his living quarters. He really did not get a lunch

break until after his first afternoon class. His first class was due to begin in ten minutes.

Harry went over his teacher tips sheet that he had collected.

Learn their names.

They should respect you, but they should never be scared of you.

Be certain that you are approachable.

Treat everyone with equal respect.

Students will learn best if they can see a practical application to a topic.

Thank you allowing me to help you today.

He walked in the door. It was the first year Slytherin and Ravenclaw class. "Good afternoon class. My name is Professor Potter. I will be helping you learn and practice various defenses against the dark arts. This is the hands on portion of the class." He sat on the front of his desk to get closer to the students.

"Let's pretend that I was a bad guy. I was going to fire off some nasty spell to hurt you. What would you do? Think of something, and please write it down on the scrap of parchment that I put on every chair. I will give you half a minute to decide what you would do." He walked to the back of his desk to give them a bit of time to think of their answer and write it down. "Who would like to go first?"

"Roger?"

"I'd try to blast you first."

Harry wrote Blast you first on his whiteboard. "OK. Colin?"

"I'd duck."

Harry wrote Duck. "OK. Ericka?"

"I'd run away." The class laughed.

Harry wrote Run away on the whiteboard. "Any answer is OK. Lisa?"

"I'd hide."

Harry wrote Hide on the board. "OK. We will try it. The rest of the class, please step to the side and watch what happens. Roger, take this tennis ball and be ready. I'm going to walk out that door and come back in through one of the two doors. Roger, if you can hit me with the tennis ball before I hit you, you will win. Colin, you try to duck my shot. Ericka, try to run out the door, and Lisa, you try to hide."

Harry walked out the door and waited fifteen seconds. He walked quickly in the door that he had walked out of. With his tennis ball in hand, he waited until Roger had thrown. Harry did not have to dodge the throw. It went wide by three feet. He tossed a ball at Colin who ducked. The ball glanced off Colin's hip. As he did, Ericka ran out the other door. Harry looked around the room and found Lisa. He soft tossed a ball at her hitting her on the leg. He picked up another ball and tossed it at Roger who was not watching what was happening.

He gathered the class back together, remembering to collect Ericka who was still standing outside the door. "First of all, thank you for participating. There were no wrong answers to my question. Any of your ideas would have worked some of the time, and not have worked some of the time." He avoided using the words failed, or gotten you killed. These were first years.

"Roger, what happened with your idea?"

"I missed you."

"Right. It doesn't matter what spell you cast if you miss. We will have a practice unit on accuracy."

"Colin, what happened with you?"

"I ducked, but you threw the ball and it hit me."

“Right. We will also have a unit on agility.”

“Ericka, what happened with you?”

“I ran away while you were looking at Colin.”

“Excellent. We will have a unit on speed and quickness.”

“Lisa, what happened with you?”

“I decided on a plan before I knew if it would work. There weren’t many good places to hide in the classroom.”

“I should hope not.” The class laughed. “Later in the year, we’ll have a unit on concealment, so you can hide if you need to.”

“Now, I would like everyone else in class to look at their parchment again. How many of you wrote down run away?”

Three hands were raised. Harry gave each of them a chocolate frog. “How many of you think you could have ducked, and gotten away?” A few more hands were raised. Soon everyone had gotten a chocolate frog or a house point.

“Thank you for letting me help you learn today. I will see all of you next week.”

“Thank you Professor Potter,” the class said in unison. The students were all smiling at him. They left. He had gotten through his first class.

Dumbledore appeared next to him. “Well done, Professor Potter. You kept them engaged, showed respect for everyone’s ideas and reinforced your points. I dare say that you made an outstanding first impression.”

“Thank you Professor. I had a lot of fun too.”

“Enjoy your day Professor,” Dumbledore said, patting Harry on the shoulder.

The agenda for each of the classes was similar. In the second year class, several of the kids who had been in the joke shop told their story about the man who hid, but got caught. They left no doubt in anyone's mind that Harry had come and saved them. In reality, they saved themselves by staying out of the way until help arrived.

His first class with Dr. Chang was the basics of swordsmanship. They had met in Harry's classroom. Chang brought several hard cases along, while Harry brought his own sword.

Chang examined Harry's sword for a few minutes, immediately realizing that it was a rare, magical weapon. "The weapon that you have is a European longsword when it is full size. It has a thirty three inch blade and a seven inch handle. It weighs about three and a half pounds. It's amazingly sharp. You can hold it with one hand or two. I will show you several basic thrust moves and a few cuts. Since your opponent is unlikely to have a sword, you may consider holding it two handed. This requires that you face your opponent, but requires less grip strength. Please allow me to demonstrate." He demonstrated the moves very slowly at first, talking about the arm and leg movements. Gradually, he built up speed, reinforcing what he had said about the various movements.

"Dr. Chang, my intended opponent will be twelve feet tall, and blind. I need to be able to stab them or cut them badly probably in the head or neck area. I probably will be on my broom, so I will have to do this one handed."

"Then I recommend that you shorten the sword slightly and cast a mild charm on it to have it weigh only about two pounds. Given your size and build a thirty inch overall weapon would fit you best. Harry shortened the weapon and lightened it slightly. It felt much better in his hand."

"If you would, please put your remarkable weapon back in its scabbard. We will practice this evening with the wooden sword." He charmed the sword so it had the same length and weight as Harry's sword. "There is no edge on the wooden sword, so we will not accidentally cut ourselves."

Harry practiced the slices and thrusts that Chang showed him. Chang gave Harry the pair of wooden swords and asked him to practice the basic moves a while each day to build up his arm and wrist strength.

Harry's day classes were going remarkably well. On Thursday when he got to the sixth year class, the discussion was a bit more emotional. Ron relayed his attempt at hiding, and the torture that followed. Hermione related the story and about the capture of Vincent Crabbe by her mum throwing a wine bottle at him. Harry related a story about Luna knocking over a bookcase and breaking a Death Eater's leg. The mood of the class lightened with laughter. Harry reiterated the need to know basic first aid. "We will also spend a lot of time this year on blocks and other defensive techniques."

His own defensive classes were nothing short of brutal. On Friday Kingsley had him outside dueling four of the Aurors at once. He went the entire session without being hit, but had bruises and cuts all over his arms legs, back and face by the time he was done. At the end of the lesson, Kingsley and the other Aurors stood by Harry. "I want you to know that we went easy on you this morning Potter," Kingsley said trying to maintain a straight face. Harry said nothing for about thirty seconds watching each of the Aurors breath hard. He smiled, and they all started laughing. Kingsley said, "You did great. I'll be sore for days after having chased you. See you next week Potter."

"Thank you all for helping me," said Harry.

Friday afternoon came. It was time for Dumbledore's staff meeting.

Professor Flitwick stood up, looking at the bruised form of Harry, and said. "It is an old Hogwarts tradition that the new teacher buys drinks for their first staff meeting. I don't recall anything about professors receiving beatings though." Everyone looked at Harry and snickered.

Professor Dumbledore had mentioned this to Harry, who had come prepared. Harry levitated a case of cold butterbeers onto the table. He was careful to always use his wand in doing magic. Only Flitwick, Minerva, Sir Nicolas and Dumbledore knew about Harry's ability with

wandless magics. "Let's at least drink to my still being alive." All of the teachers laughed.

"Well done, Harry," said Professor Chang. You appear to be both an attentive student as well as a popular professor."

The general discussion was that the mood in the castle was considerably lighter than in previous years. McGonagall attributed it to a few students being missing. Flitwick attributed it to Harry. Harry attributed it to Chang. No one mentioned Snape by name. Dumbledore smiled. "Whatever the reasons, we should take advantage of the opportunity. Does anyone have any suggestions on increasing interaction between the houses?"

Changing the house tables to smaller tables seating 4 or 8 people over the weekends.

Find a spare room to be a Hogwarts common room that anyone could use.

Have the staff sit at the round tables during the weekends.

Start the Defense Club again, and open it up to everyone.

Dumbledore liked the ideas. "We will start with the round tables tonight. Argus can you be ready?"

"I will manage," he said, his scowl never really leaving his face.

"Harry, do you have time to run the defense club?"

"I could from 6 to 8 on Thursday mornings."

Dumbledore shook his head. "I hesitate to have students firing stunners at each other before they are fully awake yet. Perhaps another time could be found?"

"How about every other Sunday from nine to noon?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Much better. Filius, can you make the changes to the third floor armory? I'm certain that the armor could be moved to another location."

"I'll have it done."

"One last order of business. I would like to schedule the first Hogsmede weekend on Saturday the 28th of September this year. I am of course concerned about the possibility of an organized attempt to harm our students. Harry with your knowledge of the area, the paths less traveled, and the surrounding areas, could you keep an eye open for possible places to station a teacher or Auror? Perhaps you could take a look tomorrow, or Sunday if you have the opportunity?" He hadn't mentioned the Marauder's map by name, but Harry knew that Dumbledore hadn't forgotten it.

Moody spoke. "I'd be happy to..." Thunk. Minerva kicked his wooden leg.

"Mad-eye, give the kid a break. He'd probably rather be accompanied by Miss Granger than you." Everyone laughed.

Dinner that evening was delightful. Each of the teachers sat at a different table, and gradually the students filed in. Luna, Neville, Ginny, Ron, and Hermione sat by Harry.

"What's with the little tables, mate?" Ron asked.

"We won't have house tables from Friday evening through Sunday evenings," Harry answered.

"It gives students from different houses the opportunity to visit," said Luna. She and Ron were holding hands.

"How was your week, Harry?" asked Neville.

"It was fun, but really exhausting. How about yours?"

"It was the first week I ever had in potions without losing house points." Everyone laughed, but there was truth to what he had said. No one in the school had earned a detention that week.

After dinner, Harry asked Hermione if she would go to Hogsmede with him the next day. "Of course, silly. What time?"

"As early as you could be ready. We have a little Order business to do."

"I can be ready at six. Do you want to have breakfast in the great hall or the pub?"

"The pub. Let's meet by the front doors."

"I'll see you tomorrow."

"Goodnight."

Hermione smiled at him. "Enjoy your last class, Professor Potter."

Harry found Poppy up in her area off of the hospital wing. She had several realistic medical mannequins in sizes varying from toddlers to adults. "Good evening Harry. How was your week?"

"I really like teaching. I hope to learn enough technique to be able to actually get the students to learn what they need to know. I've quickly come to realize that my knowing the content is not the same as being able to transfer the knowledge effectively. I will keep working on it. My own classes are fantastic. Quite honestly, I have been looking forward to this time with you all week. When I was trying to help Tonks this summer, I felt so helpless."

"Have a seat Harry." He handed him a cold butterbeer. "First of all, you quickly realized that there is such a thing as teaching technique. That puts you miles ahead of some of the teachers that you have had over the years. Second, there is a lot of reading material on the subject of learning theory. Try a muggle college bookstore. One of the fun things about teaching is the repetition. You have the opportunity to try differing techniques for teaching the same lesson."

Observe what works and what doesn't. Filius is a good resource. Third, you did the best that you could that day with what you had with Auror Tonks. You gave first aid. First aid is something that a layperson might do to help a victim before a Healer or Mediwitch can be found. You passed the blood test. Three out of four people would have fainted or retched, and that poor woman would have bled to death within a minute. So what did you actually do to help her?"

"She was bleeding badly from a gash on the side of her head. After the remaining Death Eaters apparated away, I held my hand over the wound to try and stop the bleeding, and talked to her."

"Was she conscious?"

"At first. She was dying in my arms."

"There would be many worse ways for a young witch to go, Mr. Potter." She winked at him. "So what you did was try to stop the bleeding and keep her conscious as long as you could?"

"Right. I can show you if you wish."

"Wizard boys and their pensives. No thanks. I get the picture. Come over here." He walked over to one of the female mannequins. "Where was she bleeding?" Harry pointed to the area. "How badly?" Poppy opened a cut and the mannequin started bleeding.

"Quite a bit worse." Poppy deepened the cut. Blood was literally gushing onto the floor. "Like that."

"Hold your hand over the wound like you did." Harry showed her. The blood slowed, but did not stop. "Harry, you must have helped her within five to ten seconds of her being hurt. From the Mediwitches' accounts that I read, she had probably bled three to four pints by the time that help arrived. Make no mistake, Nymphadora owes her life to you."

She showed him how to close a cut with her wand. "The trick is that there is more to healing a cut than closing over the skin. If an artery is lacerated, you need to close that first." She showed him the

technique. "The problem is that most wizards can't move their wand finely enough to do the job right. It would be easier if you could just use your index finger."

Harry thought about what she had said for a minute. "Let me try another time." She cleaned up the mannequin, and the blood, then re-cut the wound. Harry laid his wand down and traced the area with his finger. The wound closed without a scar! Harry vanished the blood away and let Poppy examine the area.

"How did you do that?"

Harry looked her in the eye. "I'm learning wandless magics in one of my tutoring sessions. Please don't tell people. It really is supposed to be secret. I trust you Poppy. This is important to the Order."

"You have my pledge. I will modify your future lessons accordingly. You have a good eye and excellent dexterity Harry. I would be surprised if the Mediwitch who treated her did as well."

She looked at the healed mannequin again. "I was asked not to assign you a lot of homework, or extra reading for right now, so we can leave it here for the night."

"Thank you Poppy. When you think of it, stop by my room some time. I found something for my room that you had told me about. It really has been helping me."

"I would be happy to. Enjoy your week-end, Harry."

"You too. Thanks again."

It was nine thirty. It had been a long day. Harry went to his room and was asleep within minutes.

Saturday - 7 September – 6:00 AM - Hogwarts

At six Harry met Hermione at the front door. The rain from the night before had ended, leaving the ground damp. They walked down the front lawn past Hogsmede station. "I learned to apparate going from that side of the station to the other," said Harry, pointing as they walked by, hand in hand.

"Was it hard?"

"I was pretty noisy when I started."

"Show me." Harry walked twenty feet away from her. He disappeared. The next thing she knew he was standing in front of her kissing her.

"Wow Harry. That was fantastic."

"Thanks."

"No silly, your kiss. Now show me again without snogging me until I'm weak-kneed."

"Wow. I didn't hear a thing. You really have that down. I missed you so much Harry. Tell me about your week."

"OK, but don't tell anyone. On Monday mornings, Sir Nicolas Flamel is tutoring me. He's teaching me Occlumency. He's really cool."

"But I thought..."

"So did I. I guess that he had enough elixir stored to last a few years. Monday evening I work with Minerva. Tuesday morning I spend with Professor Dumbledore. After dinner, I work with Professor Flitwick. On Wednesday morning, I have finance lessons with the Gringotts goblins. After dinner Dr. Chang is helping me. Thursday or Friday mornings the Aurors work with me. Thursday evening I have self-study topics. On Friday evenings, I have healing and first aid with Poppy. She showed me how to fix arteries and heal cuts."

Harry continued. "The DA is going to be on Sunday mornings. That leaves me all day on Saturday to devote to you."

"I see. Exactly what did you have in mind?"

"Anything that would make you happy."

"Thanks Harry."

"How are Ron and Luna doing?"

"They're...OK. I think he really misses you."

"That will change when Quidditch season starts. I think he'll be worse than Oliver Wood was."

"Seriously Harry, try to spend some time with him."

"OK. How about if we have Ron and Luna, Ginny and Neville over tonight? I could make pizza, and we could listen to the WWW. I can have you five over when I want."

"That would be great. Is it Christmas yet?"

"No. Not yet. Soon."

"So what do we need to do for the Order?"

"The first Hogsmede weekend will be early this year. The teachers are worried about a massive dementor attack. I am supposed to look for look out spots, defensive positions and escape routes."

"How far away could they be seen?"

"They can't apparate. Amelia is asking the Unspeakables for any information, regarding how fast that they can travel, and the like. My concern is that somehow all two hundred surround the town, and panic sets in."

"How many of the teachers know the Patronus charm?"

“About half. Less than a handful of students can do it so far. Not as many as will know it. Knowing it and being able to call a good Patronus when surrounded by a bunch of dementors are two very different things. I had trouble with two on me a year ago. Maybe we could get port keys made, or have flyers on brooms.”

“What about a combined attack? What if he sends his Death Eaters along too?”

“That would be really bad. I think a lot of people would get killed if that happened.”

“What about escape routes?”

“There is the trapdoor under Honeydukes. My concern is that he secretly sets up anti port key wards in a building like the Three Broomsticks, gets a bunch of people trapped in it, and starts it on fire. He probably is still cheesed off over Riddle Manor being torched. Speaking of the Three Broomsticks, can I buy you breakfast my love?”

“I thought you’d never ask.” They walked in. It was nearly empty, still being early. Rosmerta saw them there and greeted them.

“Ah Mr. Potter. You’re back. What can I get you two?”

“Two pub special breakfasts, two coffees, and two orange juices please,” said Hermione giving Harry a questioning look.

“I took Professor McGonagall here after she showed me how to apparate.”

“How did you get your license? You’re not seventeen.”

“Director Bones signed both my Magical Practice License and my Apparation Certificate. I think she feels sorry for me.”

“I’ll be Seventeen in a week and a half. Do you suppose one of the teachers would show me how to Apparate? She lightly ran her hand

along his knee. I could ask professor Flitwick to give me lessons, I suppose...”

“Hermione Jane. You know I will help you.”

“I know, but I love to tease my favorite professor.”

“Am I your favorite professor?”

She tormented him with silence for a few seconds. “I suppose.” She tickled him until the food came. They had a great breakfast together, like the ones at the Black Dog. Harry paid the bill and ordered another two cases of butterbeer. Dobby appeared and brought them back for Harry.

They walked through each shop. Harry kept trying to find out if there was anything special that Hermione would like for her birthday.

“Harry, if I asked you for a million galleons would you give them to me?”

“Yes.”

“If I asked you for an engagement ring would you give it to me?”

“Yes.”

“If I asked you for an owl, would you buy me one?”

“Yes.”

If I asked for an autographed Harry Potter poster would you give it to me?”

“I suppose so.”

If I asked for a birthday hug and kiss, would you give them to me?”

“Yes.”

"If I asked you for a red BMW convertible, would you buy me one?"

"Yes."

"If I asked you for a cell phone, would you buy me one?"

"Yes."

"If I asked you to hold my hand, and take me for a walk on my birthday, would you?"

"Yes."

"OK. You choose. I don't need 'stuff' Harry. I just want to be with you."

"I know, but you would look great driving a red BMW."

"Thanks, but we don't have a place to park yet."

"Shall we walk back? I need to get a few things ready for tonight."

"Only if I can help you."

"OK. Can I meet you in the Three Broomsticks in fifteen minutes? I need to do something for a minute."

Fifteen minutes later he appeared by her side. "Are you ready?"

As they walked back, Hermione asked, "Am I your favorite student?"

"Yes."

"If I was naughty, would you give me detention?"

"I'm not going there."

"I heard that Ginny's mum got really mad when she said that at the hospital." They both laughed.

At five, Harry heard a knock on his door. Ron, Ginny, Luna, Neville, and Hermione came in.

“Where’s the food? I’m starved. Ouch.” Ginny kicked him, and Luna gave him a poke in the side.

“I’m shocked that food would be on your mind, Ron.”

“Harry this is really cool,” said Neville.

“Come in.”

Ginny asked, “Harry, what is this? It was Flamel’s manuscript on Occlumency.

“Just some old papers. Please don’t touch...”

“Practical Techniques for Blocking Mind Attacks – Written for Mr. Harry Potter by Sir Nicolas Flamel. Merlin Harry! When you said you were being tutored, I was thinking Flitwick, or Sinistra, not Merlin himself.” She looked surprised, and a bit nervous.

“He’s not Merlin. Please don’t say anything to anyone.”

Ron carelessly picked up the shrunken sword. “What’s this? Godric Gryffindor. Ouch, it’s sharp. Harry is this Gryffindor’s sword? What are you doing with it?”

“Dumbledore gave it to me. Please don’t to...”

Ginny read, “Account Management for the Wealthy by Ragnott – Head Goblin, Gringotts.”

“Please don’t...”

“ENOUGH!!!” Hermione had her “I’m really serious, don’t mess with me look” that would scare any rational person into submission. “Harry invited you into his home for dinner and a visit, not the inquisition. Put everything down. His business is his. Can we agree on that?” The others nodded. “OK. Sit!!!”

Harry conjured six comfortable wooden kitchen chairs and everyone sat down. "I'm sorry. I should have put that stuff away before you came. It's not your fault. That stuff was out. You were just being curious."

He continued. "I'm being tutored in Occlumency so Voldemort can't try and possess me again. Dumbledore gave me the sword as one way to help fight dementors. You probably read that the dementors went over to Voldemort's side about a month ago. The Gringotts business is kind of personal. I am involved with a trust fund, and need to learn about that kind of stuff. The Auror books are mostly techniques on killing people. The Healing books contain techniques on saving people. My lessons with Dumbledore focus on when to use one or the other. I just wanted to have my friends over tonight." There were tears welled in his eyes.

Neville spoke. "No worries Harry. Let's start over. Nice prints that you have on the walls."

"Do you have any beverages? Ouch. Stop that, you two."

Harry smiled again. He conjured an oak rectangular table that comfortably sat six. Hermione recognized it as a smaller version of his own kitchen table. Plates, and flatware appeared, followed by three steaming pizzas – one cheese, one pepperoni, one half green olive, half everything. Twenty ice cold butterbeers floated onto the center of the table. "Let's eat."

Five minutes later, Harry conjured four more pizzas. Ron was eating himself into an imminent case of serious indigestion. Ginny and Luna were amusing themselves watching his extreme gluttony. Neville was asking if there was any progress with the potions research, and Hermione was looking carefully at the submarine print.

Fifteen minutes later, things were back to normal. Harry brought out his Wizards camera. Dobby appeared and asked if he could help. He stood on the table and took several photos of the six of them standing together. Harry asked Neville to take a few photos of Hermione,

Dobby, and himself. Harry thanked Dobby who disappeared back to the kitchens.

Too soon it was time for everyone to leave. Luna asked to stay for a moment, and asked Ron to wait outside. Ginny, Neville, and Hermione had left to go back to Gryffindor tower. "Harry, I wanted to thank you. I don't know what you did, but everyone in Ravenclaw is treating me properly this year."

"I don't think I did anything Luna. Maybe people just started seeing what a great person that you are."

She hugged him. "Well then, thank you again for a great dinner and an evening of wonderful conversation."

"Good night Luna. Goodnight Ron. Did you want to bring that last piece of pepperoni back with you for a snack?"

They left. Harry left his door open, and began cleaning up his living area. "May I come in, Mr. Potter?" It was Poppy. "I was just visiting Minerva, and saw that your door was open."

"Please come in."

"I like your artwork, Harry. Is that a Russell?"

"Yes. I liked the colors. I think that was a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman, but I have no idea what the Native Americans had done to deserve that treatment."

"If I heard right, you have a motorcycle much like that one?"

"Yes. Sirius left it to me. Hermione and I rode it a few times over the holidays. It is a lot of fun."

"Of course, the last print is quite familiar to me. Tell me, how deep is your boat these days?"

"It is nowhere near as deep, thanks to yourself and some of my other good friends."

“Thank you. I am honored, and happy to be included in your circle of good friends. Speaking of friends, I would expect that your young friends were quite interested to see you tonight. I’m certain that they were curious about you. Being curious is not the same as being nosey. Though you would do well to keep sensitive materials away from casually curious eyes. I really should go now. Thank you for having me in Harry.”

“Thanks for coming to visit Poppy. Good night.”

Harry’s second week was similar to the first. His own class with Flamel progressed at an astounding rate. The manuscript that Flamel had written was clear, easy to understand, and quite complete. In 670 years, he obviously had perfected his writing skill. He brought several more manuscripts for Harry to have – Wandless Magics, Maximizing Spell Strength, Legilimency, and An Introduction to Alchemy. Harry thanked him profusely, knowing that these were in fact priceless works. Monday night, he had his session with McGonagall. She showed him how to cast two spells at the same time. “I hope that you never have the need to use this technique, but if you need to, you will have it.” A lot of the lessons that he would receive in the coming weeks would contain those words.

On Tuesday, he received an envelope from Griphook, indicating that Harry’s instructions had been followed exactly. Inside the envelope were six keys. He took three out of the envelope and put them on his key ring. The others he left in the envelope, which he put in his dresser drawer.

Tuesday morning he spent alone with Dumbledore. He was looking concerned, and handed Harry the Auror report on a dementor attack in Cornwall County in the southwest corner of England. Dumbledore spoke. “Tom has had enough time to disburse them all around Britain if he wanted to.”

Harry saw the concern in the old wizard's face." Sir, I'm more concerned about a concentrated strike. Fifty or a hundred dementors at a time would be almost unstoppable."

"Harry, which of the students can cast a solid Patronus?"

"Hermione and Cho."

"Which others could within a week?"

"Ginny, Susan, Luna and Lavender."

Dumbledore winked. "Have you provided all of these women with a happy memory?" They both laughed.

"Shamus probably could cast one too. Don't say a word."

Dumbledore liked having someone to laugh with. "Harry, thank you. Never forget to laugh, and enjoy your life. Laughter, music, and the company of a spirited...Ah, but back to business. I would like you to pick an extra session time to have with those seven. I will make their excuses with their respective professors. If you think of any others, please let me know."

"Wednesday from ten until one will work best. I've already received my materials from Gringotts for the week."

Dumbledore vanished the dementor report after Harry handed it back to him. "Harry, I believe that there is at least an even chance that there will be a dementor attack on the Hogwarts weekend. I realize that the date has not been announced, and I have no concerns about a staff person leaking the information. I do believe that Voldemort has found a place to hide the dementors and stage an attack from. What did you conclude after your visit on Saturday?"

"The secret tunnel from Honeydukes is still intact. I checked it personally. We could station staff members at your brother's pub, by the shrieking shack, by Honeydukes and by the south side of the road. If they are hiding, I don't think they would come from the west or south side. The surrounding farm land is too open. That leaves the forest to the east, or the hills to the north. We could have a few flyers

on broomsticks. Cho and Ginny fly well. They could keep a lookout and cast a Patronus without fear of being surrounded. Did Amelia get any information from the Unspeakables that would confirm the belief that dementors glide, but not really fly?"

"Not yet. I will contact her again today."

"What about making some port keys that would transport someone to the front lawn, by Hagrid's?"

"I no longer possess the stamina to create 350 port keys in the course of a week."

"What about a dozen? We could use golf clubs. We could put several in each building. A bunch of people could hold on to it. They would have to be wand activated. Adding the stress of giving everyone an emergency escape device for when the dementors attack sort of defeats the purpose of going to Hogsmede the first place."

"Harry in the event of an attack, letting all of the dementors get away and getting all 350 children back safely would not be a loss. Killing 90 dementors and losing 3 students would be a tragedy. Our responsibility is to the students. We can go after them when we don't carry those defensive responsibilities."

"Mr. Granger had the same conversation with me regarding keeping Hermione safe."

"That would make him a highly responsible parent."

"I will not let anyone be abandoned."

"I know. Our time this morning has drawn to a close. This is a good plan Harry. Enjoy the rest of your day. I will talk with the students as I see them."

Wednesday morning came. Harry finished his Gringotts session as soon as he could, and was only a few minutes late for the class with the seven.

"I am sorry that I am late. Professor Dumbledore wants to rapidly increase the quantity of students who can reliably cast a Patronus if needed. Before you start, I would like you please to write down three to five of the happiest memories that you might select from."

As he handed them each a parchment to write on he said, "It's possible that using one of your memories will produce a stronger Patronus than another one might. Please take ten minutes to do this."

Cho started to whine. "I already know how to cast a Patronus."

"I know. Your form is quite a remarkable swan if I recall. Please hear me out. A year ago, I had to cast a Patronus in front of two dementors that were attacking my cousin. It was a lot harder than during practice. It took me three tries to remember my happy thought. Professor Lupin has lent me his class boggart. I can get it to turn into a dementor to practice with later."

Harry continued, "Let's try with each of your first memories. You can do them at the same time if you want. On three. One, two...three."

An otter, a swan, several wisps of vapor, a beagle and an owl appeared.

"Susan, is that your beagle?"

She beamed at him. "I remembered hugging my Mum after the attack last summer."

"That's a great memory to use. Luna was that your owl?" She nodded. Harry was very happy for her.

"Great. Let's try it again with your second memory. One, two, three."

A much brighter otter, a rabbit and several wisps came out.

“Lavender, was that your rabbit?”

“Yes. I did it!”

“I knew that you could. You’re a good witch.” They did it a few times until they each had their strongest memory.

“Now we’re going to try it with the lights out a few times. Use your strongest memory. Nox. One, two, three.”

A fox, beagle, otter, owl, cat, rabbit, and swan appeared, and wandered around for a few seconds. “Great fox Ginny. Shamus, you have a great looking cat. It’s kind of a skinny cat, but I am very pleased for each of you.” Harry put the lights up. “I have a bracelet for your wrist for your happy memory. Think about your memory. It will be inscribed on your bracelet. Only you will be able to read it. Everyone else will only see your name.”

“Cool. Thanks Harry,” said Lavender.

“Are you ready to try it in front of a dementor? What we are going to do is to let it have its way, scaring you for a minute. You will each relive your worst memory. It’s only a memory. It’s not real. After that we will take a break for a few minutes and try casting in front of it.”

Harry thought about being afraid of a dementor. The boggart was just practicing a form of Legilimency. He would force a dementor to come out of the box. “Ready? One, two, three.” Harry tapped his wand on the trunk to open it. The dementor slid out and stood a full twelve feet tall. Harry felt himself reliving the memory of Tonks bleeding out in his arms. A minute passed. ‘She lived,’ he thought, “Ridiculous,” crack. Harry pushed the boggart back into the box. “I would like you to think for a minute about how that bad memory got resolved. You do not have to tell anyone what it was. It did get resolved. You are here. You are alive. Please have as much of this chocolate bar as you can eat.” He gave them each a large Honeydukes bar.

He continued. “The next part is going to be the most important step.” Harry avoided saying the hardest part. When the dementor comes this time, I want you to force the happy memory back into your mind,

and cast your Patronus. Read your bracelet if you need to. OK, one, two, three.”

The dementor slid out. It’s rattling breath causing unhappy thoughts to come to mind. Several wisps of silver vapor came out. “Try again,” Harry said in a loud voice. An Otter leaped out of Hermione’s wand, followed by a skinny cat, followed by an owl. “Try again.” Another otter came out, followed by a fox, and a beagle. “Come on Cho,” he said. “Try again.” On her fifth try a swan came out. Harry chased the dementor back into the box.

“Well done. You all did it. More importantly, you all know that you can do it in front of a dementor. Please keep your bracelet on at all times when you are out of the castle. It might save your life.” Harry gave each of them a butterbeer and another chocolate bar. Dobby appeared with a tray of sandwiches. “Your afternoon teachers know that you will each be a few minutes late. I’m so proud of each of you.”

Professor Dumbledore appeared. “As am I. Well done Mr. Finnegan, Miss Chang. Miss Lovegood, that was a lovely owl. Well done Miss Bones. I especially liked the rabbit, Miss Brown. Well done Miss Granger. Thank you Professor Potter. I would ask each of you to try your Patronus a few times before dinner this evening. Ten points for each of you.

If you will all excuse me, I need to speak with Professor Potter for a moment. The others thanked Harry and filed out. Dumbledore sealed the door. “Harry, I wanted to give you the opportunity to try this yourself. Do you have your sword?”

“Yes. I would like to try it a few different ways.” Harry thought of his getting his picture taken with his new family. “Expecto Patronum.” Out of the tip of his finger emerged a very bright stag. “Expecto Patronum.” Holding both hands out emerged two stags. He let them disappear. Holding Godric’s sword, he called “Expecto Patronum.” From it emerged the whitest brightest largest stag that Harry had ever produced.

“Fantastic Harry. If you can identify any candidates in your defense classes this week, you might schedule another session like this.

Perhaps we could get one more person able to produce a form by the outing. Thank you again."

Harry nodded. "Amelia will be very pleased to hear of Susan's accomplishment."

"She is growing to be quite a capable young witch. Much of the credit belongs to you."

"You are too generous Professor. She is very tough mentally. She seems to have Amelia's sense of self-discipline."

"Be that as it may, Harry. Currently there are more students in this school that can cast a corporeal Patronus than staff members, including ourselves."

"I would be happy to help Professor."

"I will see what I can arrange. Thank you for your very generous offer."

Harry's lesson with Dr. Chang that evening was a continuation of the previous lesson. "A longsword like yours was originally designed to pierce plated armor in a stab. That is the reason for the straight design, and the pointed tip. However yours is an exceptionally sharp weapon, among the sharpest that I have seen, so you can also do a slice." Harry had brought his broom. Chang conjured some practice mannequins similar to what Poppy had used, only taller. Harry found that he could maintain his balance best with a front on stab.

Wednesday evening after Chang's class, Harry had Remus over for a late dinner and a dozen butterbeers. Harry told him of his lessons and tutoring sessions that he had been receiving as well as his classes. Remus had been tracking down the source of the wands that Voldemort had acquired. To no one's surprise, the Malfoys had paid for the wands.

Harry started thinking out loud, "What if their home was torched, their vault emptied, and Narcissa encouraged to disappear, all in a day? We don't know how much cash they have. Was the 350 thousand

galleons that she paid a month ago a big hit, or petty cash? Suppose her key is found. Could Tonks go and make a withdrawal or a transfer? Left homeless and without her gigantic golden cushion, could Mrs. Malfoy be encouraged to take a long, long vacation in Tasmania? What we don't know is how diverse their holdings are. Do they have one vault, or twenty? Are they an old blood family, or an old money family? Who could help us do some research?"

They looked at each other and began laughing. Remus smiled. "Actually, I was thinking Bill Weasley. Bank balances wouldn't be found in text books, and most wizarding transactions aren't widely published."

"Define widely."

"Assuming that they are reported, someone in the ministry would have a record. Someone at Gringotts might have a record, and someone at the Prophet might have heard about it."

"Good. There's more than one possible source of a leak. Would Dumbledore go for it? Their money is an enemy now, more capable of inflicting damage than Crabbe or Goyle were."

Remus smiled. "An almost greater question, is would Amos? Stay clear of this Harry. I will run with it, and see what the reaction is."

"You need to be absolutely certain of who is told. Otherwise, all we may have is a case of arson on a well insured house, and a key that doesn't fit anything. I would stay clear of Amelia if Percy is around."

"That sounds like a story for next week. I should go now. It's good to spend time with you again. I miss our evening chats."

"Me too. Good night." Harry was sore from the sword handling lessons that Chang had given him earlier that evening. Two hours of waving even the wooden swords around left him quite sore. He hadn't said anything to Remus, but he could barely lift either arm.

Thursday morning arrived, and Harry was still wearing his robes from the night before.

He showered and got dressed. His classes that afternoon were promising. In the Slytherin / Ravenclaw fifth year class, Luna's Owl Patronus impressed everyone. Where an outcast had stood a year ago was now an interesting young woman with obvious talent. The subscription rate to the Quibbler would grow five fold, as her father had moved his outlook a notch more mainstream, and featured occasional interviews with Harry in his role as a first year teacher. Harry let Luna explain the process that she had used to identify her happy memories. Several students had produced wisps of vapor by the end of the class. In the Hufflepuff / Gryffindor class, Ginny dazzled the class with her fox Patronus.

Colin Creevey showed real promise. A wisp of silver vapor appeared on his first try. Harry borrowed Colin's camera and asked Ginny to take a picture of Harry and Colin in class together. "Give it another try Colin. Whoosh. A huge cloud of vapor appeared. Flash. Ginny had taken another photo. Harry had an idea. "Colin, I suppose that I could get Rita Skeeter to publish a picture of you in class with your Patronus. You could send it to your mum and dad. Let's try again." Whoosh. Out tumbled a bear cub! Flash. "You did it, Colin! You did it."

The class applauded Colin. He had been at best an average student in his previous classes, badly intimidated by both Snape and the Slytherins. His worship of Harry had been a source of constant ridicule within Gryffindor tower. This year had been different. Harry seemed to bring the best out in his students. His kick arse exploits over the summer were a lot easier for students to relate to than the fifteen year old boy-who-lived story. Invariably they did their best for him. The virtual removal of the sixth year Slytherin class, along with the departure of Snape and Umbridge had created a brighter, more tolerant atmosphere within the school. Colin was the sort of student that thrived under the change.

In the sixth year class, Lavender's bunny, Hermione's otter, Shamus's skinny cat, and Susan's beagle were well received. Harry went through the process again, helping people identify various happy memories. He asked the others to help him so the instruction

was more personal. Whoosh, Neville had produced a vulture. “Well done Neville.”

Neville was obviously pleased with himself. “It was my memory of my Gran telling me how proud she was of me.”

“Try it again.” Whoosh. Out came the vulture again. Flash. Harry had brought his camera. Neville beamed. The class applauded him.

“Please try to identify some more memories for your homework. I’ll see you next week. Neville, please wait after class for a moment.” For a moment some of Neville’s old fear of teachers returned. Harry smiled at him erasing that thought. “I have something for you. Think of your happiest memory. It will appear on your bracelet. Only you will be able to see it.”

“Thanks Harry. It was of today’s class.”

“You are getting to be a really good wizard Neville. Your mum and dad will be proud of you too. Real soon I expect.”

“Yes they will Neville.” It was Professor Dumbledore. “Frank and Alice are beginning to respond to the new potions that Severus Snape is developing. I believe that there is good reason to hope that they will continue to improve. You did a fantastic job in class today. Ten points to Gryffindor for your efforts. I have also awarded Colin Creevey ten points for his bear cub. Unfortunately I saw it was chasing Mr. Filch’s cat down the hall, so I was required to take one point back. Well done, Neville.”

“Could I speak with you for a moment Harry? Enjoy your evening, Mr. Longbottom.”

He sealed the door after Neville left. “Congratulations to you Harry. Your results far exceeded my hopes. Was anyone else close?”

“Padma had a lot of vapor.”

“I talked with a few members of the staff. Pomona Sprout and Rolanda Hooch would like to try. Could you meet with them sometime

over the weekend? Please let me know of another day next week. Could Wednesday morning work again?"

"Yes to both questions."

"On another matter, Remus related your idea. I will present it to Amelia, Amos, Mundungus, and Tonks over the weekend. Please avoid any personal involvement in this. It may be the right thing to do, but without knowing where their funds came from, it is hard to judge the fairness of taking them away illegally. Narcissa is Belatrix's sister, and is a very capable witch in her own right, though I would say quite a bit more rational. Enjoy your evening, Professor Potter."

Friday at dinner, the first year defense class had queued up to sit with Harry. Out of respect, they left a seat for Hermione, leaving several unhappy students who were left out. Walking down the stairs to the hall, Hermione saw Ericka Smith in tears, guessed the reason, and told her to go sit next to Harry. Ericka beamed as Hermione brought her next to Harry. She gave Harry a kiss on the forehead, and asked Ericka to keep an eye on him at dinner for her. The little witch was positively ecstatic. Hermione winked at Harry, and sat by Flitwick, Luna, Ginny, Neville, Susan, Seamus, Lavender and Ron.

Professor McGonagall had dinner with her third year Slytherin Transfiguration class. Professor Chang was telling his table stories of growing up and visiting the Chinese Fireball dragons with his parents. There wasn't a single table that was filled by a single house. Dumbledore wondered why he hadn't thought of this idea fifty years ago.

The weekend was about as good as it could get. Harry took Hermione out for breakfast at the Three Broomsticks. They spent the rest of the morning working on apparating from one part of town to the other. It took Hermione a while longer to learn than Harry had. She could do it, but always with a champagne bottle POP sound while reappearing. They walked back to the school, got permission to call Amelia Bones for a test, walked back to the station, called and set up an appointment for one in the afternoon. To keep legal, Dumbledore had made her a port key that would take her to the Ministry lobby. They took it together, and walked to her office. Harry said hello and

waited outside. Thirty minutes later they both walked out the door, Hermione beaming. Harry was invited in for a moment. Amelia closed the door, leaving Hermione waiting in the lobby. Ten minutes later, Harry walked out the door, and shook Bone's hand. She waved to both of them as they walked off, wishing them a good day.

"Congratulations my love. According to wizarding law, you are now a fully qualified witch. When will you get your License?"

"She said that she would send it to me on my birthday."

"Dumbledore would ask that you not mention having taken and passed your test today. Do we need to get anything before we go back?"

"Harry, do you realize that we could go have lunch in Paris? We could still be back at Hogsmede by 3:30."

Harry hugged her and brushed her hair with his fingers. "We could, but not today. Neither of us has apparated across water yet, and we both need more practice. I don't want to violate Dumbledore's trust. If you want to have lunch in Paris or Rome, we will over the Christmas holidays. I promise you Hermione."

"OK, but I want to get us something. Can we go shopping at Harrods for half an hour?"

"Let's go."

They took a taxi to Harrods. Hermione bought them both black leather motorcycle jackets. Hermione couldn't really afford them, but thought that they looked good together in them. They took a taxi back to the Leaky Cauldron. They had lunch at Tom's and apparated back to the Hogsmeade station.

On Wednesday Professors Hooch and Sprout arrived in Harry's classroom. Each had an apple in hand for Harry. They all laughed. Harry followed the same process that he had with his regular

students. They ran down the various memories that they had written, and tried with each. Hooch produced a nearly formed Patronus on her fourth try. Each of Sprouts memories produced varying amounts of silver vapor. Harry gave them a butterbeer and they took a break for a few minutes.

They tried again with their strongest memories. Hooch produced an eagle. It soared around the room for a few seconds and disappeared. She asked him if that was the expected result. Harry replied, "If there are no dementors present, they will disappear after about ten seconds. I had one last two minutes once, chasing dementors." He had them try again. Professor Sprout produced more vapor this time, but no form yet. "It took me over a month to get a form when I was learning it. Keep trying it with different memories. He gave Hooch a charmed bracelet to record her memory. He told Sprout to come back next week, and they would work on it some more. Harry let Dumbledore know of Hooch's success.

On Thursday Harry had received permission to use the Room of Requirement for the evening. He invited everyone at school who were friends with Hermione, along with Tonks, the Grangers, Diane, and the teachers, promising them fun and an evening to remember. Dobby had "helped him" decorate the room. It was set so that it had an open window and a large open space. The walls were decorated with streamers of every color. Winky had made Hermione a fancy decorated cake.

Harry had conjured high tables and stools like he had seen in the Black Dog. He conjured quite a few pizzas for Ron and enough for everyone else. Not surprisingly, most people had found books of some sort for gifts. Ron found her a history of the Chudley Canons volume. He would borrow it in a week. Lavender got her a book on setting up a proper wizarding household. Her parents got her several photo albums for her wizarding camera. Luna got her a subscription to the Quibbler. Minerva gave her a pearl strand necklace from the teachers. They had a great time visiting and seeing her family again.

Emma was a hero for conking Crabbe on the head with a wine bottle. She was asked to tell that story a half dozen times. Poppy had fun visiting with Diane talking kindly about their favorite patient. Amelia Bones had personally sent Hermione her Magical Practice License then signed her Apparition License before giving it to her. Tonks got her a skinny Weird Sisters top with spaghetti straps. It was totally out of character for Tonks to get someone a mainstream clothing gift. Harry cut the cake and began passing pieces around.

Two snowy owls flew in through the window carrying a long package. One everyone recognized as Hedwig. The other owl was a young male unknown to them. Everyone looked around. Lavender looked at the box and said, "Hermione, it has your name on it." Hermione untied the string that held the package to the young owl's leg. The owl hooted at her. She looked at Harry, who nodded and smiled at her. "You are a very handsome owl. Can I call you Sir Nicolas?" The owl hooted proudly. Everyone laughed, and smiled. Harry just happened to have a package of owl treats in his robe pocket, and gave it to Hermione. She offered each of the owls a treat. They hooted again, and flew off together. "Thanks Harry. He is a beautiful owl."

She gave him a kiss on the cheek. Hermione opened the package that her owl had brought her. Everyone began laughing. She unrolled a Harry Potter – The boy-who-lived poster from when Harry was barely eleven. It was signed, To Hermione, Love Harry. There were hundreds of Harry Potter posters hung up in the witches dormitories at Hogwarts. This was the only one that had ever been signed.

"Lockhart would be quite proud of you Harry," kidded Ron.

"They wouldn't have been bad books if they had just been labeled fiction to begin with," said Seamus.

"Or fantasy," muttered Minerva.

Hermione looked in the box. Another small box was inside. It contained a cellular telephone. Harry told her that the phone was charged, but she would have to go to Hogsmeade to get a signal. There also was an envelope in the box. She opened it. Out came a

set of keys with a BMW insignia on them, a Gringotts key, a car park receipt, and a diamond ring! Harry got down on one knee in front of her and asked in a voice loud enough for those close to him to hear, "Hermione Jane Granger, after you graduate from the Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry would you do me the honor of being Mrs. Harry Potter?"

Hermione got big eyes for a second, and then beamed. "Oh Harry. Yes. Yes. Yes, I will."

She gave Harry a very serious kiss. Everyone clapped.

Harry floated several cases of butterbeer around for everyone to take. Harry toasted her. "To Hermione, the love of my life."

It was Hermione's moment. Everyone came up and congratulated her. The ring that Harry had made was a reflection of the two of them – understated elegance. It had the two carrot diamond that Mundungus had saved for him to use set in a platinum band. Diane, Dan, and Emma congratulated both of them. Harry got hugs and kisses from both of them. Dan shook Harry's hand. "Thank you for inviting us to share this very special moment."

"I'm really glad that you came. Thank you so much."

Dan nodded. "Thanks for making the arrangements. I could really get used to this port key travel."

Emma came up and kissed him again. "Can Hermione really call us once a week?"

"Yes. Saturday mornings would probably work. She can go to Hogsmeade village with me any Saturday that she wishes. I will remind her to call."

"Thanks Harry. We really miss talking with you. I do like the letters delivered by owl though. You found a very handsome companion for your Hedwig. It looked like there were some other things in the package. I didn't see what they were."

Harry wasn't sure how they would react to the other gifts that he had given their daughter, and decide to put off finding out. "They were just some other stuff that she asked for. She'll probably show you over Christmas break."

Emma didn't press him for details. "Keep her safe Harry. That's your main job. We love you both."

"Thanks mum."

Harry spent several hours with Cho, Ginny, Neville, and Hooch practicing flying over the forest on Wednesday. They tried casting a Patronus while hovering. Their forms glided down to the ground, searched for a minute, and then disappeared. Then they flew around the hills to the north of Hogsmeade. Again Harry had them cast a Patronus. They glided down to the ground and disappeared. When they got back to the castle, Dumbledore was waiting for them. "Did you have any success?"

"We didn't find anything. Everyone was able to cast a spell from their broom."

"I'll tell Miss Weasley, Miss Chang and Mr. Longbottom that we require their services on Saturday. Can you fly the hills in the morning? I'll ask Rolanda Hooch and Miss Chang to cover the forest, and Miss Tonks and Mr. Longbottom to cover the south and west side of the village respectively. I'll station Minerva at the Three Broomsticks, with Miss Granger. I'll station Filius at Alberforth's. I'll ask Miss Bones, Mr. Finnigan, Miss Brown, Miss Weasley, Miss Lovegood and Pomona Sprout to walk the students to the station."

It was as good of a plan as they could get.

On Friday the queue to sit with Harry at dinner had lengthened considerably. Harry picked the largest table to sit at. It immediately filled up with students. Several brought posters with them. Harry welcomed the students. The posters were banished back to their dormitories, rolled up, unsigned. Hermione saw his predicament,

smiled, and waved at him. They would have desert together in a half hour.

The first Hogsmeade weekend came early, on Saturday the twenty eighth of September. It was a date that none of them would ever forget. The morning started out sunny, but by midday the clouds had drifted in, leaving a chill in the air.

Remus and Tonks had been asked to watch the east and south ends of town respectively

Dumbledore had given each of the flying or Patronus casting students and the staff one of Fred and George's "No BS Really Loud Firecrackers" to sound off in the event that they found something. The students had been told that in the event of any problem to immediately get into the Three Broomsticks, the Hogs Head, Honeydukes, or Zonkos.

It was cold flying. Harry was wearing the motorcycle jacket that Hermione had bought him the day she got her Apparation license His arms felt frozen and his face felt numb. The weather started drizzling. Harry flew back and forth hour after hour looking for people, dementors, or rats. By one, he was seriously chilled. He put a warming spell on himself, but it didn't seem to help. He was soaked.

At one thirty, he heard it. Bang! Harry looked around one more time and flew into town. Out of the forest came a seemingly endless wave of Dementors. Harry used the Sonorus charm to magnify his voice. "Everyone get into one of the buildings." The streets cleared. Harry pulled the sword, and cried "Expecto Patronum." A huge stag emerged. He cast the charm over and over. A moment later a very strange thing happened. Two stags hit the same dementor at once. The dementor sizzled and vanished leaving only a black cloak on the ground and a very foul odor in the air! He cast the charm over and over looking for students who might be out. He saw little Ericka Smith running down the street. A half dozen Dementors were circling her. She was scared witless. "Expecto Patronum. Expecto Patronum." The Dementors had reached her. Harry flew by and stabbed one of the Dementors through the head. It fell, and sizzled, like the other one.

He hit another, and another. He grabbed Ericka, and apparated into the three broomsticks.

Setting Ericka down in the pub, Harry Apparated back onto the street, and called for his Firebolt. He got back on it, and kept calling the charm. Stag after stag appeared. He flew around the town again, calling the charm over and over. After a few minutes, he saw Remus on the ground. His left arm had been severed by a curse. No dementor had done that to him. "Expecto Patronum." Harry called two stags to give them cover. He picked up Remus and Apparated back into the three broomsticks. By then most of the students had port keyed back to Hogwarts. Harry spent a few minutes using the healing charms that Poppy had taught him to stop Remus from bleeding out. Harry asked Hermione to port key Lupin back to Hogwarts. He went out a third time, soaked in his friend's blood, with murder on his mind. He killed ten or twelve more dementors, all the while looking for students and Death Eaters. He found Cho who had fallen off of her broomstick and was unconscious. He cast several more stags and Apparated her back to the Three Broomsticks. He Apparated back to his broomstick. He cast several more stags, each chasing or goring more dementors. Then he saw him. Peter Pettigrew was running behind one of the buildings! Harry cast another Patronus. As he flew by, Harry expanded and swung the razor sharp sword. Peter's head dropped to the ground and rolled as his body ran for a few more steps. Harry stabbed another ten or twelve Dementors before they scattered. Harry checked the town one more time and landed. Zonkos was deserted. The Hogs Head pub was deserted. He went to Honeydukes. It was deserted. Finally he went to the Three Broomsticks. Minerva was waiting for him inside. She hugged him, handed him the port key, tapped her wand and they both found themselves back on Hogwarts front lawn.

The heads of houses did a count as quickly as they could. All of the students were accounted for. All of the staff had been accounted for.

Dumbledore surveyed the chaos and closed his eyes for a moment to think. "Harry, where is Tonks?"

End, Part III

Story

The heads of houses did a count as quickly as they could. All of the students were accounted for. All of the staff had been accounted for. Dumbledore surveyed the chaos and closed his eyes for a moment to think. "Harry, where is Tonks?"

End, Part III

Part IV – 99 Deaths and Counting

Saturday – 28 – September

Dumbledore was quick to react. "Harry, first go to the train station. Call the Ministry. I will go with Minerva and recheck the town. Please assist us if you would. Filius, please get everyone back into their dormitories."

Harry took the Portkey that Dumbledore had made to Hogsmeade station. Harry called Amelia. She would send all of the Aurors there within ten minutes.

Harry called for his Firebolt. He flew into the center of the deserted village. Dumbledore asked him to check south of town. A few minutes later he found her. Tonks was surrounded by a dozen dementors, and rapidly losing. "Accio Tonks." She flew fifty feet over to him landing hard on his broom in front of him. Remarkably he caught her and was able to get the broom down before landing very hard. "Expecto Patronum." Two stags flew from his fingers. "Expecto Patronum." Two more. Harry got back on his Firebolt and chased down six of the remaining Dementors. Within a minute there were twelve black cloaks on the ground. The stench from the dead dementors was disgusting.

Harry went back to Tonks. She was freezing and shaking. He cast a warming charm on her. He was so tired that he didn't feel up to apparating both of them. He put her on the front of his Firebolt, got on behind her and somehow flew the three miles back to town in the freezing rain. By then there had to have been every Auror in the ministry there. Strighthand and some of the others were collecting

dementor robes Amelia had the insight to bring a half dozen healers. Harry brought the broom down and collapsed.

He woke up early on Tuesday morning in the hospital wing. Over six hundred get-well cards were lining every inch of space in his reserved spot. Newspapers were on his stand.

Poppy noticed him. "Ah. Harry. It is nice to see you up and about. There are a dozen people outside already waiting to see you. I have a nice set of your robes in the closet for you to wear. Sit up dear." She helped him get up, and into the shower. "You'll feel much better when you get cleaned up." She gave him a motherly hug.

Harry came out of the bathroom, looking and feeling much better. Poppy handed him his glasses, and charmed his hair dry. She gave him another hug. "Harry, I wanted to be the first to thank you and congratulate you. I cannot even imagine how many lives you saved on Saturday. Maybe as few as four, or as many as hundreds, I don't know. I wasn't there. I am so glad that you are all right. I'll go tell the others that you'll be out in a few minutes."

She continued. "Hermione has been here most of the time. She's such a lovely young woman. Professor Dumbledore has been in to see you a few times, as were most of the members of the wizarding law enforcement group. I'll be right back."

"Wait Poppy. How are Tonks and Remus?"

"Oh, Harry dear. Miss Tonks is fine. She'll be released from St. Mungo's in a few days. She was quite shook up from her encounter with those horrors. Remus survived, thanks to you. He did lose his left arm, the poor dear. He was transferred back to St. Mungo's yesterday. He'll be OK. Miss Chang was transferred to St. Mungo's Saturday evening, as was little Ericka Smith, and a few other students. None of them had serious injuries."

"Harry!!!" His bushy haired lover came and swept him up. "I love you. I love you. I love you. I was so worried." She hugged him so hard.

Harry grinned at her. "Hermione, if you keep that up, I won't be able to walk out the door. You're so beautiful."

Hermione looked embarrassed, but only for a second. Then she smiled wickedly. "Oh,...Professor Dumbledore would like to see you in his office. Amelia Bones, a few Aurors, Amos Diggory, and some men that I don't know want to speak with you. Let me help you." She straightened his robes, brushed his hair, and grabbed his hand. They walked down the hall until they reached the gargoyle. It stepped aside without being asked!

Dumbledore beamed at them. "Professor Potter, Miss Granger, come in. Come in. It is wonderful to see you up and about. Please take a seat. I know you must still be tired. Can I get you anything? Dobby appeared in his little wizard robes, holding a tray of cold butterbeers. Harry took one.

"Thank you Dobby. You look very good in your robes."

"Thank you, Harry Potter sir. You is a great wizard."

Dumbledore spoke again. "Professor Potter, this is Robert Winston and Dr. David Michaels both from the Department of Mysteries. They are of course highly interested in your experience with the dementors. You are under no obligation to tell them anything that you do not want to, but your information could be useful. If it would help, you are welcome to use my solicitor's pensive."

Harry nodded and reached into his sleeve for his wand. Hermione flushed, reached into her robe pocket, and handed it to him. "Sorry," she whispered.

Harry withdrew a long silver thread, and placed it in the solicitor's pensive. Before he started it, he said, "Hermione, I killed a lot of dementors and a man on Saturday. There will be a lot of blood. I would like to spare you from having to see those things."

"Harry, if you were strong enough to have to do those things, I am strong enough to watch. I love you." He smiled at her, but it was a very sad smile.

Harry started the pensive memory so they could all see and hear. In the first five minutes, he had personally stabbed over thirty dementors. His Patronus stags had gored another fifty. Harry stopped the memory and whispered to Dumbledore who shook his head. Dumbledore got up and said, "Harry pulled a larger memory than he intended. I must ask Mr. Winston and Mr. Michaels to wait outside for a few minutes. I believe that you have seen as much of Harry's encounter with the dementors as is needed. He will be available to answer your specific questions in the near future."

They got up, and muttered something about interdepartmental co-operation. Dobby appeared. Dumbledore asked Dobby to escort the two men into his outer office. When they had left, Dumbledore sealed the door, and spoke to Amos and Amelia. "The matter that I am going to talk about is of the utmost secret. It is imperative that it does not leave this room. Is that agreeable?" They both nodded. Harry resumed the memory. He wandlessly cast two Patronus forms at once as he landed to aid little Ericka.

"Merlin!" said Amelia. "I've never seen anything like that, ever. Harry, how did you do that?"

Dumbledore spoke. "It is not relevant to what we are doing today. Please understand the advantage that Harry would have if he was to face Voldemort in the future, and Voldemort knew nothing of this." They both nodded. Harry continued. The image showed him rescuing Cho Chang and finding Remus. It showed him each time double-apparating himself and his rescue victim. Harry stopped, and then restarted the memory. Ten seconds later, the severed head of Peter Pettigrew had fallen to the ground. The image showed him returning to the Three Broomsticks exhausted and returning to the castle with Minerva.

The image showed Dumbledore asking if he had seen Tonks. It showed Harry returning to the village and looking for Tonks on his broom. It showed him wandlessly casting multiple stags, and stabbing several more dementors before casting a spell to summon Tonks to him. It showed him flying back to the village, barely able to stay in the air, finally reaching the village, landing and passing out.

They all sat in silence while Harry walked back to the table. He opened another butterbeer, had some and rubbed his forehead and eyes in fatigue. After nearly a minute, Amelia spoke. "Harry, we found 96 dementor robes on Saturday. It appears that you were responsible for all of them. You have also provided us with undisputable proof of Pettigrews involvement as a Death Eater. As such, I formally request Minister Diggory to issue Sirius Black a full pardon. I know that it won't bring him back, but his memory deserves to be cleared."

She continued. "Miss Granger, I must ask you to step outside for a few minutes. Then, I would ask you both to accompany me for a few hours." Hermione hugged Harry, got up and stepped through the door as Dumbledore unsealed it, and resealed.

Bones continued, grimmer than Harry had seen her. "Last Friday a woman who appeared to be Narcissa Malfoy was seen entering Gringotts. Gringotts records indicate that the woman emptied the family vault. The assets were moved to an undisclosed location. While she was there, it appears that the Malfoy Manor burned down due to an accidental fire that apparently started in the kitchen. When we attempted to reach Mrs. Malfoy and notify her of the fire we were unable to find her. A neighbor found her body a half mile away from the manor. An autopsy revealed that she had been raped, beaten, tortured and kissed by a dementor before being murdered. Additionally her nude body had nine broken ribs. We need to ask you, did you have any contact with Narcissa Malfoy last Friday evening between five and six PM?"

Harry was shocked at the news. "No Director Bones. I was having dinner in the great hall with eleven of my students."

She replied. "I didn't think that you would have, but we were obligated to ask. Minister, do you have any questions for Professor Potter that cannot wait until another day?"

"No Director. Thank you for your thorough diligence in this investigation. I am afraid that we must conclude that Peter Pettigrew and/or Voldemort was responsible for her death." Dumbledore unsealed the door, and invited Hermione back in.

“Harry, before you go, I must give this back to you for good.” It was Gryffindor’s sword. Dumbledore had cleaned it, and fitted it with a new back holster. Hermione helped Harry put it on.

Bones, Hermione, Dumbledore, and Harry took a portkey to St. Mungo's. “Harry, there are a few people that would really be cheered up by your spending a few minutes with them. Would you mind?”

They went to see Ericka Smith first. Her mother was in the room sitting with her. Harry knocked softly on the door before stepping in. “Hi Ericka. I just came by to see how you were doing?”

“Hello Professor Potter sir.” It was Ericka’s mother, Anna. She was stammering out a combination of thank you, I am forever in your debt, and we are honored that you came.

“It’s Harry Mrs. Smith. Just Harry. I am pleased to meet you.” Harry conjured up a dozen roses and a vase for little Ericka. He told her, “I expect to see you back in class in a few days. OK?”

She beamed at him. “OK!”

“I need to go now. Goodbye Ericka. Goodbye Mrs. Smith.”

They visited Cho next. She was there with her family and Dr. Chang. Dr. Chang saw them at the door and welcomed them in. “Professor Potter. Please come in. Cho was telling us that you had saved her. We cannot thank you enough.”

“Dr. Chang, your lessons with the sword gave me the skill that allowed me to save many lives. The school owes you a great debt. Your grand niece sounded the alarm that helped save the school.”

At this point Cho burst into tears. “Harry, I didn’t do anything. I lost my firecracker, and fell off of my broom. Professor Hooch must have sounded the alarm. Please forgive me.”

Harry patted her arm. "Cho, there is nothing to forgive. All of the students are OK. Please get some rest, and come back to school as soon as you can. OK?"

She wiped the tears from her face, and nodded.

"I need to go now. Goodbye, Mr. and Mrs. Chang. Goodbye Dr. Chang. Goodbye Cho."

Susan Bones was next. She had been injured in the portkey trip back to Hogwarts. Harry smiled at her. "Hello Susan. It is good to see you up. I wanted to tell you that the first thing that I saw was a beagle Patronus chasing a dementor." Susan smiled at him, her blue eyes welled with tears. "It must have allowed you to get all those kids into the Three Broomsticks. Have you shown it to Director Bones yet?" Susan called the charm. Out came a silvery beagle that looked around for a few seconds before disappearing.

Amelia looked so proud at her. "Susan, your parents will be so proud of you. Get well soon. She hugged her grand niece. "Professor Potter will expect you in class on Thursday." Harry winked at Susan. He had brought her flowers too. She winked back at him.

"See you soon, Susan."

"Bye Harry. Thank you very much for coming to see me."

Next they went to Tonk's room. The healer was going to ask that no one go in there until she recognized their faces. She opened the door without a word.

Her small form was curled on the bed in a fetal position, shaking. Amelia spoke. "Harry, please spend some time with her. Maybe you can get to her. Hermione and I will be with Mr. Lupin. We'll come for you in twenty minutes. Healer, leave them be please." She walked out and closed the door.

Harry walked up to the bed and brushed her blond hair from her eye. "Hi Tonks." She didn't say anything. He reached over to hold her

hand. She took his hand and held it to her. They stayed that way for a minute in comfortable silence. Harry asked her if she could get up. She nodded, and he helped her up. He helped her out of her soaked hospital gown, and put on her Auror Robes. They sat on the couch in the room. He held her on his lap as a parent would hold a tearful child, rocking her back and forth.

“We survived, Tonks. We survived. That’s all that matters.”

Her blue eyes met his green eyes. They looked at each other for a while. Finally, Tonks spoke. “Harry, I was so scared. I haven’t been able to do most of my magics since the attack at Diagon Alley. I shouldn’t have even been there Saturday. I couldn’t help anybody. I couldn’t even help myself. I could have gotten a lot of people killed. Oh Harry, I’m such a mess! I should have told somebody. There were so many of those monsters, I just froze. After a moment, I ran as fast as I could. Harry please hold me tighter.” He held her for a few minutes in silence rocking back and forth to calm her.

Finally Harry spoke. “You held off a dozen dementors for I don’t know how long Tonks. Most people would have crumbled in a blink. I have so much respect for you, I can’t even begin to express it.”

“Harry, I can’t apparate, I can’t even change my hair. The qualities that made me unique as a witch are gone. Cor, I’m worthless.”

Harry shook his head. He stood her up and held her. “You are not worthless. Blood replenishing potion is not the same as your regular witch’s blood. You know that. It will keep you alive, until your body grows back its own blood. It’s barely been a month. So what if it takes three months? You can be on leave for the rest of the year Tonks. This isn’t about rent money.”

She pressed her face to his neck, tears soaking his collar.

He kissed her forehead, looked at her again, meeting her eyes. “Do you need to be here, or can you come and stay with us?” She nodded. “I’ll wait outside. You get dressed properly. OK?” She nodded again. “Do you need help? I’ll get Hermione.”

“Wait Harry. One thing first.” She leaned up and gave him a very passionate kiss. “Thanks Harry. You saved me again.” She hugged him, hard.

Harry smiled at her, his emerald eyes twinkling. “Thanks. I just have this people saving thing. I guess it’s what I do. I’ll get Hermione to help you.”

He opened the door. Hermione and Amelia were waiting outside. “Hermione, could you help her get dressed properly? Tonks is ready to leave with us.”

Amelia walked him up the stairs and over to Lupin’s room. “Thank you Harry. Did she say anything?”

“She talked about being scared when she was surrounded by those twelve dementors, and having temporarily lost some of her magics. It probably was the blood replenishing potion. Healer Pomfrey told me that it takes at least a month or two to be replaced by a witch’s regular blood. She must have had four or five pints of it.”

“Six actually! I’m still amazed that she is alive.”

They walked to Remus’ room. “He’s waiting to see you. Go in.”

Remus was sitting up, looking out the window. “Hi Harry. You’re a sight for sore eyes. I never thought I’d see you again. The last person in the world I was expecting to see Saturday was that little rat taking a shot at me.”

“Don’t worry about him. I was the last person that he ever saw.”

Remus looked at his friend. “I’m sorry for that too Harry.”

Harry said firmly, “I’m not. We’ll talk about it another day over a dozen pints. Right now, I just so glad to see you. I was so worried for you.”

Remus nodded in genuine appreciation. “How did you get me back?”

“I Apparated the both of us.”

Remus shook his head in amazement. "Merlin Harry! I can't double Apparate. Where did you learn to do that?"

"I don't know. I did it a few times that day. It seemed easy enough."

Remus smiled at his friend in wonder. "Are the students OK?"

"Everyone lived. Cho got a bump on her head. I think she fell off her broom."

Remus smiled. "That's been done before. She should have thought of something original." They both grinned, and started laughing. Remus got serious again. "Harry, I'll be here a while. Can you find a sub for me for the next few weeks?"

"No worries, Remus. I'll come see you again on Saturday, OK?"

"Thanks Harry. Thank you very much."

Harry went to find Amelia. She was talking with one of the Aurors who had been guarding Tonks. She finished and walked back to Harry. "Thank you Harry. They all wanted to see you. You have developed quite a following."

"Hermione says that I have a people saving thing."

Amelia smiled at him and gave a soft laugh. "Well, Harry she does have a point." She started laughing some more.

"Who has a point?" said Hermione, walking up to them.

"You do. You said that I have a people saving thing."

"Yes, and your point is...?"

"That I love you Hermione Granger. That is my point."

"Oh."

After a minute Hermione spoke. "How are we all going to get back to Hogwarts?"

"I'll get a ministry person to make a portkey," said Amelia.

"I'll do it," said Harry.

"Harry, portkeys are regulated devices," said Tonks.

"Actually, they are tarified. I hold the patent on them."

Tonks looked at him in surprise. "How?"

"Sir Nicolas Flamel invented the portkey. He gave me the patent for them this week. I'm supposed to get eleven sickles for every one that's made. Miss Tonks, you can owe me the eleven sickles, OK?" He grinned at her and they started laughing. It was good to see her eyes light up.

Meanwhile at the Crawley Connections Organisation, Dumbledore had gone to see Dr. Turnbull "Dr. Turnbull, it is good to see you again."

"How can I help you professor Dumbledore?"

"There has been an attack at the school. A large number of children were affected. I believe that they could use your unique talents for a few weeks. I don't know if you could possibly rearrange your schedule?"

Diane was worried about the students, but delighted to have the opportunity to return for another visit. "I can be ready in two hours."

Dumbledore picked up a pencil. He checked the time and softly spoke a spell. For a moment, the pencil glowed blue. "Hold this at 1:00. It will take you to the front lawn of Hogwarts. Will you need anything special?"

“No. I will be there.”

“Thank you Doctor.”

“Professor.”

Diane made the arrangements to have the other therapists watch her schedule. She called her husband, and explained that she would be gone for a few weeks. She would call him on Saturday, when she had more details. She drove home, and packed her things. Holding the pencil in one hand and her bag in the other, she had yet another wild ride to Hogwarts.

Dobby greeted her. “Good afternoon Doctor Diane. I is Dobby. We has met before. I will take your bag to your room. Please wait in the front hall, and Professor Dumbledore will see you.”

At three, Harry, and Tonks took the portkey back to Hogwarts. Hermione and Amelia had left a few minutes earlier. Greeting them on the front lawn were six hundred students, their parents, and most of the ministry staff. The applause grew as they walked up the lawn. Harry met Hermione, Poppy and Minerva who walked them up the front lawn. Each of the students held a small sign that read ‘Thanks Harry.’

Dumbledore spoke. “We have much to be thankful for this week. Professor Potter saved us...again. He just finished visiting the few students who remain in the hospital. I expect that everyone will be back for class on Thursday. Auror Tonks will be at school for the next month. She will be filling in for the classes normally taught by Professor Lupin, who is still recovering. After you are done greeting everyone, and having refreshments on the lawn, we will be having a lovely dinner and music out in the east garden. Please take the time to enjoy yourselves. Classes will resume tomorrow.” McGonagall and Flitwick had conjured the tables and chairs. The elves brought cases of butterbeer, pumpkin juice, and trays of snacks.

Harry greeted people for an hour, then went back to his room to get some rest. Hermione said that she would collect him at 5:30. She greeted him wearing one of the sets of dress robes that he had

bought her. Tonks was with wearing a set that she had borrowed from Hermione. Tonks was a little shorter, so Hermione had asked Winky to hem up the bottom a few inches. Both women looked fantastic! Harry invited them in, realized that he was underdressed and excused himself for a few minutes. Five minutes later he came out in one of his sets of dark green dress robes, and his dragon hide boots. He did look handsome. Hermione shook her head at the irony. "We worked for an hour and a half to get ready, and it takes you five minutes."

Harry looked at them standing together and smiled. "I must say, I do appreciate both of your efforts. You both look beautiful. May I take your picture? Dobby." The little house elf appeared in his miniature robes outfit. "Would you please take our photo?" Dobby was ecstatic. He stood on a chair, took a photo of Hermione, one of Tonks, Harry and Hermione, the three of them and one of Harry and Tonks. Hermione also took one of Harry and Dobby. "Thank you Dobby, said Harry."

"You is most welcome Harry Potter sir. If I may say, your Miss friends look very beautiful today sir."

"Thank you Dobby," the women said, blushing slightly. "You are very handsome in your outfit too."

They walked out the hall and found Diane. Harry conjured a table for four with chairs and they sat down for dinner. Harry made the introductions and they did enjoy one of the best meals that Harry could remember having at Hogwarts. Harry was quite quiet during the meal, instead listening to the others.

After a few minutes Diane touched Harry on the shoulder. "Harry, after we have finished this truly lovely meal, and you have danced with each of us at least once, can we all talk for a while about what happened?" Harry nodded. True to his word, Harry danced with the three of them twice each, and they excused themselves from the lovely party.

They went back to his room. Harry left the door open, but they would not be disturbed this evening. He conjured four comfortable chairs,

and floated out a case of ice cold butterbeers for them. Diane was reading the headlines from the last few Daily Prophets. Massive Attack at Hogsmeade. The next one read Harry Potter Saved Hogsmeade the next one read Final tally for Hogsmeade Attack: 96 Dementors, One Death Eater vs. Several Injured Witches and Wizards. Today's headline read Sirius Black Given Full Pardon – It was Peter Pettigrew, Death Eater!!!.

Diane asked him what happened. Harry brought out his pensive, withdrew a memory, and passed the pensive to Hermione. She did the same, and passed the pensive to Tonks. She did the same and passed it back to Harry. Hermione asked to go first. She was talking about a transfiguration topic with Minerva when the firecracker sounded. Minerva magically stacked all of the tables and chairs up in back, and lined the students up. Hermione had opened the door and called students to come in. She had cast her otter once, and it kept the dementors away for a minute as students ran into the building. She cast a second otter when the first one faded and closed the door. Minerva had counted 155 students and had portkeyed about half of them when Harry appeared with Ericka Smith. He left a few seconds later and came back two minutes later with Cho. The third time he came back with Remus, who was badly hurt. Harry used wandless magics to heal the severed arteries, and stop the bleeding. Hermione portkeyed him to Hogwarts. Madam Pomfrey was waiting outside for anyone that might have been seriously injured. She administered the first of the blood replenishing potions and levitated him onto a stretcher. Dumbledore waited outside for other injured students. Hermione had helped Pomfrey tend to Remus. Her memory ended.

“Hermione I’ve known you all of your life. I never pictured you acting so calmly in a crises and helping save that man’s life. Congratulations.” Hermione hugged Diane.

After a minute Tonks started her memory. The firecracker sounded. She looked around. There was no one coming from the south. She ran around, making sure that everyone was indoors, and got the townspeople to stay inside and lock their doors. A few minutes later, the group of dementors appeared. Tonks cast her Patronus. Nothing happened. She tried again and again. Nothing happened. They were getting closer, and obviously having an effect on her. She ran down

the street as fast as she could. The dementors were gliding towards her and had circled her. She was on the ground with her arms over her head when Harry arrived. He had wandlessly cast several sets of stags that had stopped the attack. He summoned Tonks who flew fifty feet into the air and landed hard on his broom. He stabbed the remaining dementors and they flew over to the Three Broomsticks and landed before Harry collapsed. Her memory ended.

“So that’s why my arse is black and blue. The next time you rescue a lady from certain death Harry, could you please be a bit more gentle with her bum?”

Harry’s face blushed tomato red.

Tonks continued. “Honestly Harry, when I tell everyone at work that Harry Potter seriously bruised my bum with his broom handle, who knows what people will think?”

Diane and Hermione were laughing so hard they could hardly sit! Tonks was keeping a stern look on her face until realization finally hit Harry. She went over and hugged him. “I’m sorry for having so much fun at your expense Harry. I couldn’t help it. Seriously, thank you. I owe you my life twice now. She gently kissed his forehead, caressing his hair.”

“No worries Tonks. You will get your magics back any day now. You are a very brave witch.” Harry was embarrassed at the attention.

Finally it was time for Harry to show his memory. Tonks had never seen anyone do wandless magics before. She had never heard of anyone doing three double apparitions in a day let alone fifteen minutes. “Merlin Harry! Where did you learn to do that? How could you be around all of those dementors without turning into jello? Hell as long as I am asking, do you always carry a sword with you to finish off dementors and mass murderers? Was that really Peter Pettigrew?”

Harry knew that he would have to say something. “I have been studying Occlumency techniques. I used them to shield myself from the dementors. I received training in swordsmanship. I also have

been receiving training in wandless magics and casting multiple spells. I was able to help Remus with the training that Healer Pomfrey has been giving me at night. That really was Peter Pettigrew. Director Bones informed me that I killed 96 dementors and Peter on Saturday. Peter had been wanted dead or alive for many crimes dating back to conspiracy to murder my parents. He was involved in the attacks at Hermione's parent's home and at Diagon Alley. I'm not proud of having killed him, but am glad that he will never harm anyone else. Everything that you saw tonight concerning the deaths of the dementors, wandless magics, double apparitions, the death of Peter Pettigrew, or double spell casting is confidential Order business. I'm sorry, but you can't tell anyone about what you just saw." No one said a word, waiting for Harry to finish.

Harry put down his butterbeer and continued. "Doctor, there were a lot of people that day that were scared witless, or feel really guilty about what they did or didn't do. If you haven't already made other plans for your stay, I would invite you to spend afternoons for the rest of the week in my defense class. All of the students who were in Hogsmeade will be there."

"That is a wonderful idea Harry." It was Dumbledore. "I was walking by to talk with Minerva for a moment. I couldn't help overhearing your wonderful suggestion. I really must be on my way. Good night all."

Diane spoke. "The three of you magically showed me your memories of the same fifteen-minute timeframe. Each of your experiences is unique. Each of you demonstrated remarkable bravery in a battle situation. None of you wished for this to happen; yet you individually prepared for the eventuality. Tonks, I think I understand the role of a police officer or Auror as you are called. Your task is to protect people. It appears to me that you did everything within your power to do that. You saved people's lives that day. Hermione, I couldn't be prouder of you. It appeared that you were prepared, and shepherded the other students to safety. You got those kids away from danger and helped save that man. Your parents will be so proud of you.

She turned to Harry and the smile fell from her face. "Harry, I wake up every morning, and wish a normal quiet day for you. As a profession, I understand that you are developing into an outstanding teacher. If

you feel the need for an additional part time job, I would recommend gardening. It is much safer than being some sort of super hero, and may be easier on your family. As such, I hope that you have plans to retire your cape in the near future. I think I speak for the other women in this room when I say that we love you too much to want to lose you. Everyone here wants you to get married, raise lots of little Potter children, and bring them over so we can watch them, while you and Hermione dance the night away.”

She continued. “That said, it is time for me to retire for the evening. Tonks, it was very nice to meet you. Hermione, it was good to see you again. Harry, you are always a wonderful host. I will see you both at breakfast.” Diane left, and Tonks followed.

After a minute, Hermione looked into Harry’s eyes. “Harry, can I stay with you tonight?”

“We agreed to wait until Christmas.”

“Not that. Can I just stay with you tonight?” There were tears in her eyes.

“OK. I’ll ask Dobby to get a set of your school robes. I’ll be in the room in five minutes.”

Harry got a set of school robes from Dobby and sealed his outer door. He walked into his bedroom. Hermione was in his bed under the sheets. He climbed into the bed behind her and held her through the sheets. She found his hand and placed it on her. At five o’clock Harry got up and took a shower. Fifteen minutes later, he woke her. She got up, showered and got dressed. Harry had made coffee, and handed her a cup.

Hermione took it, drank a sip. “Harry look at me. Harry, nothing happened that I didn’t want to happen. You didn’t violate me in any way and we didn’t break our promise about waiting. We spent a few hours comforting each other. I would say the same thing to Dumbledore or my father. Don’t be mad at me, and don’t feel

embarrassed. No one is going to say anything, but we don't need to flaunt this in anyone's face either."

"I would never be mad at you. I was trying to think of the words to say about the same thing to you. You're just a lot better at those things than I am. I love you so much." Harry may be the hero of the wizarding world, but sometimes he was just an awkward teenager.

"Thanks Harry. I love you too." She smiled at his discomfort. "Can I borrow your map? I really don't want to run into Filch this morning."

"I'll go with you, or take my invisibility cloak."

"No. Some people can see through them. I'll go by myself. You have a busy day too. I'll see you tonight." A few seconds later, she said, "Harry, you need to unseal your door."

"Sorry." He waved his finger. "Bye."

"Bye."

Harry's morning flew by. The Gringotts representatives discussed real estate and the indirect management of it as an investment. Harry met Diane at eleven. They skipped lunch and went flying for an hour, slowly circling the lake, and soaking in the sunshine and talking. His defense classes started with the fourth year. Without getting into her specifics, Harry introduced Diane as a friend of his that was visiting. He said that he liked to talk with her. Within the context of defense, he asked each of the students to write one to three feet about what their Hogsmeade experience was, and what they had done to either stay safe, or help someone else stay safe. Most of the students had read the articles that had been written in the Prophet. Harry answered some of the questions, and deferred others until later in the year. There was no mention of Peter Pettigrew. Diane suggested that each of the students make a copy of their assignment and send it to their parents along with a note telling them that they are fine. Harry asked that they please make an exception for him, and to hand it in the next day rather than the next week. No one argued with him. Things got a bit more specific in the fifth year class. Luna mentioned casting her owl Patronus. She said that it had only chased the dementors for a

few seconds before fading. Harry replied that stronger spells would last longer. They would continue their unit on casting Patronus for another session, then work on strengthening spells and first aid.

Cho Chang, Susan Bones, and Ericka Smith were back at Hogwarts in time for dinner. Harry made a point of visiting each of the students and welcoming them back. Tonks had been helping Alastor with the theory part of the class. She had not mentioned her experience with the dementors to any of the students.

The three women were back after dinner. It seemed that Professor Potter was the only teacher that had decided to assign any homework that week. Harry returned from his tutoring time with Dr. Chang. Chang had heard several accounts of the event and had been mightily impressed with Harry's swordsmanship. They would resume their potions work next week. Chang had made the Wolfsbane potion for Remus per the request of Dumbledore.

Harry's Friday morning class with Kingsley, Alastor, Tonks, and Hestia was a recap of Harry's experience on Saturday. They asked him about the dementors. Harry initially focused on the Patronus. Alastor stopped him. "Harry, none of us here has a strong enough Patronus form to gore a dementor like yours did, and we can't do wandless magics. At least I can't." The others shook their head in agreement. "Tell us how you stabbed them." Harry showed them his memory of the event. Shacklebolt was the first to speak at the end. "Merlin Harry, I had no idea you had taken all of them out yourself!!! No one at the ministry has said a word about the specifics. Was it a special sword that you used, or will any good piece of steel work?"

"I used the sword that Godric Gryffindor made. I can cast through it, so I believe that it is magical. The trick is to be able to get close to one without their thought magic getting the best of you. I think they use a form of Legilimency on their victims. My concern is that Voldemort had gotten about two hundred dementors to side with him. Roughly half were killed last week. Voldemort would be more effective sending them out in small groups than another mass attack."

Moody disagreed. "Harry if you hadn't been there and stopped the attack, it would have been a massacre. There easily would have been a hundred students killed, and at least that many residents. You had planned escape routes and lookouts. If Hogsmeade had fallen and a load of students had been killed, the ministry would have had to start some sort of negotiations with Voldemort. Diggory would have been given a vote of no confidence, as would have Dumbledore. I'll talk with Dumbledore, but I believe that the best plan would be to find a way to have a repeat of last Saturday. I have not forgotten that Remus was badly hurt, but most ordinary witches and wizards won't have a chance against a handful of those horrors."

Harry nodded. "Alastor, I've been absolutely honest with you. Will you answer me a question in return?"

The gnarled warrior looked Harry in the eye and said, "Yes. I'll tell you unless I've previously made a promise to someone regarding the particular situation that you are asking about. If I can't tell you I will at least tell you that much."

"Agreed. What happened to Narcissa Black Malfoy?"

"I don't know. If you're asking about who it was at Gringotts, I can tell you that it wasn't her, and it wasn't Tonks. If you are asking for an opinion, I wouldn't feel guilty that Voldemort got mad at her and had some sick fun with her before finally killing her. She killed enough in her life to deserve it. If you're asking if that was Narcissa that was found, the answer is yes. If you're willing to accept one more piece of advice, I would say put it behind you Harry. Lucius Malfoy probably embezzled most of that money from the Ministry. They were an old wizarding family, financially a lot more along the lines of the Weasleys than the Blacks or your parents. Lucius married into as much of the Black estate as he could grab, and sucked the rest of the money out of the ministry by lining Fudge's pockets with a sack of galleons now and then. What happened last Friday was a Robin Hood operation. You saw it yourself. That money was going to fund murder and mayhem."

He continued. "Voldemort has been steadily losing his tools and options this year. Most of that progress is due to you and Dumbledore."

You haven't done anything wrong or anything that you should be embarrassed to admit to anyone. That spunky little Smith girl owes you her life twice. Do you think her mother is going to complain to Bones because you didn't have a double apparition license yet?"

Shacklebolt interrupted Moody. "That reminds me Harry. I need to fine you three hundred galleons for three counts of double apparition without a license. That's the minimum fine. Here's your signed double apparition license effective today. If you want a license for anything else that you might be thinking of doing, please call Director Bones." Harry handed him a Gringotts draft. They smiled at each other.

Friday at dinner, Harry sat down at the largest table. Susan Bones, Cho Chang, Ericka Smith, Tonks, and three third years sat with Harry and Diane. Harry made the introductions. Ericka sat beside Diane. The subject of the attack came up. Ericka told everyone how Harry had rescued her. Tonks told a similar story. Susan talked about casting her Patronus, then running into the Three Broomsticks. Finally Cho admitted falling off of her broomstick. Harry tried to help her saying, "I did the same thing in my third year in the Gryffindor / Hufflepuff game, remember? My Nimbus flew into the Whomping Willow. That stupid tree smashed it to bits. There weren't nearly as many dementors that day as what you ran into on Saturday, Cho."

Cho wouldn't let it go. "Harry, It was an honor that Professor Dumbledore asked me to help guard the students. I completely failed."

Harry shook his head. "Cho, that's crap! Remus Lupin lost an arm that day. Do you think anyone will think less of him? You lived. Tonks lived. Ericka lived. Susan lived. What more needs to be said? If you're worried that it might happen again, either work on your defenses, or try to stay out of those situations."

Diane spoke. "In his somewhat blunt way of saying it, Harry does have a point. Susan, suppose that that your Great Aunt were to have been asked two weeks ago, what the most likely outcome would be if the village were to be attacked by a hoard of those creatures?" There was silence as everyone considered how bad it could have been.

Diane continued. "What was your tally? One serious injury, several minor injuries, and a lot of scared survivors. How could you have asked for anything better? To top it off, some of those monsters were sent to hell where they belong."

Diane paused for a moment having made eye contact with each person at the table. "I am certain that there are a lot of people in this castle who are hurting. I will help anyone that I can but I think if we had 350 kids who had tried to be heros that day, we would have spent all week burying them."

"I ran away, like Professor Potter told me to," said little Ericka, beaming at Harry.

"And it worked!" said Harry smiling back at her. "All I was trying to say is that I am very glad that you are all here having dinner with me tonight. I'm glad that we are all OK."

Dumbledore walked by. "Excuse me, Professor Potter. Could I speak with you for a moment before your evening class?"

"Of course." They walked into one of the unused classrooms on the way to the hospital wing. Dumbledore sealed the door.

"Harry, we never had a chance to talk together about Saturday. You may have been thinking it unfortunate that you hadn't been able to dispose of a few more of the dementors while you had the chance. Would you have done it at the loss of Miss Smith, or Miss Tonks? Of course not. Would you have done it at the loss of our friend Remus? Of course not." The old wizard put his hand on the young man's shoulder. "Harry you did exactly the right thing. Some of Voldemort's forces were destroyed with no loss of life on our side. That was the best outcome that could have happened."

He continued. "Peter Pettigrew will not harm anyone again. Sirius' reputation was cleared. Please do not second-guess yourself on that matter."

Harry nodded.

“What I really wanted to talk with you about concerns Miss Granger. Harry without prying into your personal life, let it be said that no one would say anything if Miss Granger were to discretely spend Friday and Saturday evenings with you. As any loving grandparent would tell you, use prevention when needed, and be careful with each other’s hearts.”

Harry did not make a sound.

Albus concluded, trying to avoid further embarrassment for Harry. “I must be going. You obviously learned a very useful lesson the last few weeks from Poppy. I only hope your future lessons will be as beneficial. Enjoy your evening, Professor Potter.”

“Thank you Professor.”

Poppy was very happy to see Harry when he arrived. “Harry, I had the chance to examine Remus when he came in last week. You did a remarkable job closing the severed arteries! His blood loss was quite severe. We would have run out of his type of blood replenishing potion if you hadn’t done such a good job.”

She continued. “I have a short lesson tonight that I hope you will find useful. She showed him how to conjure various sized dressings, and apply them properly. I have a book to give you on family healing. It has several sections that you might find useful at one time or another. Our next lesson will deal with restoring a heartbeat.”

Harry thanked her and found Hermione. He related the two conversations that he had just had, and the book that Pomfrey had given him.

Hermione smiled at his naivety. She loved him so much. “Harry they were simply trying to give you “the talk” without overly embarrassing you or themselves.”

“Oh.”

“Would it be OK if we had Susan and Seamus over tonight?”

Harry nodded. "Sure. What about Ron, Neville, Ginny and..."

"Quidditch. The first game is tomorrow. They are still practicing."

"Right. I'd forgot about it."

"Harry, don't tell Ron that. It is a huge event for him. He really wants you to come and cheer for the team. Diane and Tonks will be there too."

"OK."

"Harry, if you put on the WWW, maybe we could just dance together for a while unless you really want to spend the evening with Susan and Seamus?"

"I'd rather be with you."

"Thank you. She ran her fingers through his hair and looked over at his desk. Harry, you have never told me, when do you get a chance to study?"

"I stay up pretty late most evenings usually until twelve. It doesn't give me a lot of time, but most of what I'm working on is practical, except for the Gringotts stuff. Alastor grades almost all of the defense papers. I think the other Professors don't give me a lot of homework by design. Most of my reading is on my own. I hope to be done with most of the seventh year stuff in a few weeks."

She looked at him, quite surprised by what he had just said. "You're kidding?"

"No. I'm already done with charms and defense. I have a bit more work on transfiguration of liquids, and a few potions left to brew. I hope to start the advanced topics after Christmas break. I also have some more manuscripts that Sir Nicolas has given me."

"Hermione, remember, I'm not taking anywhere near the number of classes that you are. I don't know the first thing about Arithmancy, or Runes. I passed my OWL in Herbology and astronomy, but never

really mastered either. I'm sure that Binns doesn't miss me anymore than Sybil."

He continued. "I had a lot of practice with Remus over the summer. It helped a lot that I got my license in July. I could practice everything that I was studying. I really appreciate the time that I spend with Sir Nicolas. He taught me Legilimency this last week. I just want to find a way to get Voldemort and those dementors to be gone, so I can spend my days with you."

She gave him a sly smile. "Speaking of practice, I was reading a new book this week. I was hoping to get some practice."

"Oh?"

Hermione seemed to have mastered the subject that she had been researching.

While Harry and Hermione were studying together, Dumbledore went to see Director Bones at the Ministry.

"Hello Amelia. Thank you for staying to see me. He sealed the door. "I wanted to get your opinion regarding the Hogsmeade attack and your expectations of what might happen next."

She replied, "Voldemort tried the big play last week. He got his arse handed to him. What would possibly make him want to do it again?"

"Harry and Hermione believe the answer is to play on his wounded ego. Hermione has proposed putting out a number of news articles that Tom might see." He handed Amelia a parchment with four potential press releases on it.

Hermione Granger announces the formation of the Firstborn Society – a group of firstborn witches (children of muggles) that have achieved excellence in their fields, demonstrating that hard work and ability, not heritage ultimately will determine success in the wizarding world. The group is chartered to help firstborn witches and their

muggle parents assimilate into the wizarding world culture. Miss Granger currently the top student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is quoted as saying, "I am very proud of my parents. They happen to be dentists. They're good parents. I'm equally proud to be a witch. I look forward to starting what I hope is a large family with my fiancé Harry Potter." The first meeting will be held at the Hogs Head conference center in Hogsmeade on 26 October at 1 PM.

Ministry of Magic official Arthur Weasley announced that the Riddle Mansion estate sold at liquidation auction yesterday. The proceeds from the sale were split between St. Mungo's and the recently formed Firstborn Society. Weasley was quoted as saying that while it was unfortunate that the building burned down, he was certain that the new owner would put the property to good use.

New business in Hogsmeade – Grand Opening

Hogsmeade mayor Scott Rattray announced that a new business was opening in the near future. Bloodworks a shop specializing on blood restorative potions will open for business on 26 October. Co-owner Terry Tahpor was quoted as saying, "You never know when you might need a supply of blood restorative drafts. We helped a patient a few weeks ago and were able to save her life because we were able to apparate a large supply to the patient at the moment of need."

Ministry Aurors to receive additional training. Director Bones announced today that a group of the Ministry Aurors will receive advanced training in casting Patronus charms. The Patronus charm has been found to be successful in driving the dementors away from an area. The class will be held in co-operation with Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry at the ministry training center in Kent. Director Bones was quoted saying, "This is training that we have not needed in the past, but are now happy to receive due to the defection of the dementors. Class instructor Potter said that he was happy to help in any way that he could. Potter was attacked by dementors several years ago and plans to share the latest techniques."

Dumbledore continued. "They believe that Tom will see the articles, and become sufficiently enraged by them to incite him to attack. In

short they're suggesting that a repeat of the last attack be engineered. The difference that would be built into this plan is the elimination of the 350 students from the battleground."

"It is Harry's belief that without a large support base, or an army of dementors, Voldemort would either try a direct attack on Harry, or go away for a few years. It is of course Harry's hope to draw Voldemort out in a situation where he (Harry) would also not be forced to fight an army of Death Eaters and dark creatures at the same time. Thus if we are able to rid Britain of the dementors, we have afforded Harry the opportunity for an unimpeded shot at Tom."

Dumbledore concluded. "It is everyone's concern that Voldemort disburses the dementors into squad size teams and launches multiple attacks that most wizarding families could not defend against. Thus the basis for their reasoning of baiting the traps for a big play in a few weeks."

Bones thought about the idea for a few minutes. Harry had certainly thought this through. She could envision Hermione and Harry plotting the plan, engineering out as many of the risks as they could. Voldemort must know that some new weapon or technique had been launched against the dementors. If he believed that the Aurors were all to receive the ability to destroy them, it would diminish their long-term usefulness. Why not make use of them a time or two? The reality was that hit and run attacks from a dozen dementors would be extremely deadly. She also knew the loss of life in an attack on Hogsmeade that was improperly defended could easily be three to five hundred people.

She asked, "What alternatives did they consider?"

"They could plant an announcement that the former Azkaban prisoners were being moved. We could internally announce a movement to a muggle prison, or a return to a dementor-less guard system."

"Why internally?"

“First to lend credibility to the rumor. Second, to draw out a suspected spy within your organization. Third to avoid a public announcement of an action that may not be decided for months.”

Amelia thought about what he said for a moment. “I see several problems here. First to my knowledge, there has only been one wizard who has been able to destroy a dementor. I saw the same image that you did, but I don’t know how he did it. Susan’s beagle didn’t do anything more than chase a single dementor away for a few seconds before it vanished. I’m happy that Harry was able to cast a dementor powerful enough to kill one. It is his actions with that sword of his that concern me. They were up close and personal, and beheading Pettigrew with that light brigade saber charge of his was brutal. How ethical is it to keep placing him in these situations? Of the sixty-four Aurors currently on staff only nine have ever had to take a life. Five of them had been working with Moody at the time.”

Dumbledore nodded an acknowledgement and spoke. “It is likely that Harry will face Voldemort again in the next year. If he is able to defeat him, would you have a concern if he uses a muggle shotgun, or any other means at his disposal? How many of the Ministry Aurors will be willing to stand beside him on that day? The only person who I know will be there is Miss Granger.”

They sat in silence for a moment and he continued. “I myself have taken more than three hundred lives, mostly in service to Britain. Perhaps you may recall that Tom had chosen his path by the age of fifteen. You were a few years younger if I recall. I have no concerns about Harry turning to the dark side or misusing his abilities, none what so ever. His set of values has been cast. I do not find them lacking in the least.”

“I was a year older, but I see your point. What do you recommend?”

“You may wish to make him a part-time Auror, providing him a legal basis for his actions. I don’t think you need to offer him more than you can afford. I’m not certain what the going rate is for disposing of killers and dark creatures. Was there a reward for Bellatrix? Arguably the same reward offered for Sirius should have been offered for Peter. I’m not certain what a motivated solicitor could obtain in a settlement

for twelve years false imprisonment without a trial. My point is I think at this point we should do everything within our power to aid his efforts. I am having qualified people keep a very close eye on him to ensue that the burden that is being placed on him does not overly darken his aspect.”

He concluded. “With respect to the dementors, I have no better plan than theirs.”

She thought about it for a few moments. The only risk that she saw was Voldemort himself showing up with a large band of qualified Death Eaters at the same time Harry was battling the dementors. Dumbledore obviously believed that it was Harry that would face and ultimately defeat him, but no one could duel Voldemort while fighting off a swarm of those dementors! What if Voldemort came and started systematically killing the entire village? He could easily kill off Hogsmeade or any other location this afternoon before someone could stop him. The reality was once he started taking direct action, hundreds, perhaps thousands of wizards and witches would die. How could she help Harry? Dumbledore had a point. Would any of her Aurors stand with him, in the face of certain death?

Amelia thought for another minute, reviewing options. “Tell me what you need, and we’ll be there. Getting Voldemort to stay in the poker game and betting big again will take a bold move. I’ll check with Winston and Michaels to see if they have any ideas.”

“Thank you Amelia. Please do not mention anything strategic to anyone other than your licensed Aurors. Enjoy your evening.” He unsealed the door and left.

Saturday – 5 October

Harry and Hermione got up the next day and went running at six. Then they went to the Three Broomsticks for breakfast. Rosmerta was visiting with a few of the other merchants. She had their breakfasts ready and waiting. Rosmerta and the merchants came over. An old man spoke. "We don't mean to disturb your breakfast Mr. Potter sir, or Miss. We just wanted to say thank you for saving our town. If there is ever anything that we could possibly do for you, just say the word. Thank you Sir, Miss."

Hermione said, "Wait. Would you have time to eat with us? Please."

The merchant looked surprised at their willingness to be friendly with commoners. "Of course, Sir, Miss."

"Harry, just Harry. This is my fiancé, Hermione."

"Please to make your acquaintance, Mr. Harry sir. Miss Hermione. My name is Duncan. Congratulations. A bit of breakfast wouldn't hurt. Thank you for the offer." The old merchant and the others sat at the long table with them. They had a fine breakfast together. Harry promised to send the other students back to town as soon as he could. He told them the story about Peter Pettigrew, trying to clear up any misconceptions regarding Sirius. Harry bought more butterbeers, and chocolates. The old merchant told him that after seeing all of those creatures, he was certain that everyone in the town was going to be killed that day. Everything was offered to him for free. Harry insisted on paying for everything. He asked that the Honeydukes person send little Ericka, Cho, Susan, Tonks and Remus a chocolate bar each as they had each been injured that day. Harry wrote down the names, and paid for the chocolates.

They went to visit Remus. After visiting for half an hour chatting about who was OK and ordinary school stuff, Hermione started explaining their plan to destroy the remaining dementors. Remus listened very carefully as they individually and jointly explained their idea.

After a minute, Remus asked, "Why do you think they will fall for your trap?"

Harry answered. "I want them to think there will be a seven or eight minute window of time when they could attack before I could reach them. I have two secret possible solutions to reduce the response time. The first is to use the cellular telephone. The second idea is to be there the whole time. I think it is possible that there is a spy in either or both organizations. I plan to explain the possibility of the eight-minute response time both at the Order meeting and within the Auror organization. If there is a spy, I expect that they will pass the weakness in the plan along."

Remus nodded. "I understand how you could convince the Order. What about the Aurors? They would know if you weren't there doing the class."

"I was hoping to have my favorite professor substituting for me using Polyjuice potion. That way, I'll be able to be at the meeting, or be nearby, the Aurors will actually get the training that they need, and any onlookers would assume that it was me. You simply need to slip out of here for the day, unless you have your eye on any of the young healers, and have other plans?" Harry winked and smirked at Remus. They laughed together. Hermione shook her head, muttered something about one-track minds and then laughed with them.

Harry continued, "I'll be by next week with my pensive to show you the day from my perspective, so you can answer any questions that might come up."

It was time to leave. Harry and Hermione both hugged their friend. They apparated back to the station to talk with Dumbledore for a few minutes before lunch. Harry found Ron and Ginny. He wished both of them luck for the Quidditch game. Ginny hugged Harry. "I really wish that I would have had the opportunity to play on the team with you Harry." Her light brown eyes met his. "I understand that you have other things that need to be done, but I wanted to say that we miss having you hang around the common room. Ron won't say it, but he really misses you too." She kissed him on the cheek. "I suppose I could get detention sometime."

Harry smiled at her. "I suppose. Mad Eye handles all of the detentions. I could let him know you are interested. I'm certain that he would enjoy your company." She stuck her tongue out at him. They both laughed.

It was a beautiful day for a Quidditch match, blue sky and cool temperatures. The stands were full, and the signs and banners were friendlier than Harry could ever remember. By the draw this year, the first game was Ravenclaw against Gryffindor. Gone were the Weasley is our King banners that had marred previous games. Diane, Harry, Hermione, Minerva, and Tonks found seats in the Gryffindor section. Hermione sat between Diane and Harry, who was seated next to Tonks. Hermione was explaining the basics to Diane. She was mesmerized as the teams came out and flew their warm up laps. "That looks so fun," she said to Hermione, who had never thought of being in the air unsupported by anything less than an airbus as fun.

Madam Hooch had the captains shake hands. As it was Ron and Cho there was none of the bone crushing hand gripping with threats muttered under the breath. Harry thought about that for a second, from his new perspective. It was only a game. It wasn't the great Gryffindor army going to war against the evil empire.

He watched the game from his new perspective. The Gryffindor chasers, Katie, Ginny, and Colin played well together. They had practiced their passes and formations allowing them to pass back and forth reliably. The beaters Kirke and Sloper from last year were still hopeless. They had little sense of where the key play would develop, and often as not hit the bludger towards the opposing chaser that had just passed the ball rather than try and distract the chaser who would be trying to catch it.

Dennis was doing a decent job as seeker. He had a light build and a keen eye. He was riding Ron's old Cleansweep 260 that Ron had either lent or sold to him. Ron was guarding the goal hoops riding the new Firebolt that Harry and Hermione had given him.

The Ravenclaw team had not changed much from the year before, and as such played better together. Their beaters did their best to distract the Gryffindor team. Both keepers were about evenly matched, blocking about half of the shots thrown to them. The score was 80 to 70, Ravenclaw leading. Each time a score was made three fourths of the students had cheered.

Harry had seen the snitch several times in the first hour. Unfortunately Dennis and Cho were too busy trying to one up each other that they had not. As luck would have it, and it was luck, Dennis accidentally flew into the snitch about ten minutes later. He had the presence of mind to grab it, and Gryffindor won the game 220 to 100.

It was only a game. No one had gotten hurt. Players from both teams would have dinner with members of the other house that night. Student unity was at its highest point in Harry's memory. Ravenclaw or Slytherin weren't the enemy. Voldemort, his followers, and a hoard of soul sucking dark creatures were the enemy. He hoped that Dumbledore and Bones would seriously consider his plan.

Harry was brought back from his introspective thoughts by the four women that had accompanied him to the game. "Well Harry, how did you enjoy the game from this vantage point?" asked Hermione

"No one got hurt, and I had the opportunity to spend a fantastic afternoon with the love of my life and three other beautiful women. How bad could that be? Ron blocked quite a few difficult shots, and the chasers played well together. Ravenclaw's beaters are very good. They kept the score as close as it was."

Diane said "What a great game! Does the team that catches the snitch always win?"

Tonks answered, "At this level yes. In the professional ranks it is fairly common that a team will be up or down by a hundred or two hundred points, so not so much there."

Minerva smiled. "It was lovely weather, the company was very enjoyable, Gryffindor won and no one got hurt. Thank you all for a fine day."

Diane nodded. "I enjoyed myself very much. Thank you all for accompanying me."

"Let's go into Hogsmeade. It is a nice day for a walk," said Tonks. "Harry, did you get a chance to read all of the papers that the students had written about the Hogsmeade attack?"

"Yes. If they're correct, there was only one Death Eater there. No one tried anything stupid. I am really glad that we had the discussion about different ways to react to an attack in class. Ericka legitimized running away on the first day in class. Getting away turned out to be the best idea. As for the papers, I gave them to Diane to look over. What did you think?"

Diane replied, "Tactically, I agree with you. Emotionally it gave me a window to see which kids really needed talking with. They were the ones who needed reassurance that this sort of thing wouldn't happen everyday in their lives."

Harry said, "You may want to have a talk with Cho Chang. She absolutely believes that she failed that day. She didn't fail. She simply lacked the defensive tools to protect herself. In retrospect, she was set up to fail. No one could maintain themselves with that many creatures giving off dark energy."

Diane quietly said, "It doesn't always help to have other people try and rationalize guilt away."

Harry remembered the depths that he had sunk to last summer, and nodded, slightly embarrassed.

Hermione asked, "How is it that Ericka was in Hogsmeade that day anyway? She is a first year."

Harry replied, "Flitwick had let her go as a special treat. She had earned the most house points of any first year in September. She'll probably never want to go again."

Tonks poked Harry. "She probably would if her favorite professor kept an eye on her." For some reason, all three women found this to be highly amusing. Harry looked quite sunburned as they got to the Three Broomsticks.

Rosmerta greeted them warmly. The pub was not very crowded. Business was obviously down. After they had finished, Harry ordered three cases of butterbeer to go. He also went to Honeydukes and got another large supply of chocolate frogs, every flavor beans, licorice wands and sugar quills to give out in his classes. The merchants thanked him, both for his business, and also for his protection.

Lastly he went to Molly Malkin's. He ordered Dobby and Winky another set of gray miniature robes to be delivered on Monday.

He floated everything back until they got within sight of the castle. Harry thought about Dobby for a moment. Dobby appeared. "How can I help you Harry Potter sir?"

"Hi Dobby. Please bring these back to my room. Thank you very much."

Dobby bowed, and with a soft pop, disappeared.

Hermione looked at Harry. "How did you do that?"

"I just thought about Dobby and he came. That's all."

They went to the great hall for dinner. Luna, and Pansy joined them. Conversation at dinner was polite. Pansy had been in the Three Broomsticks the day of the attack to see Harry carry in Ericka, Remus and Cho. No one knew about Tonks. As they were getting up, Pansy asked Harry if she could talk with him privately some time next week. Harry made an appointment to have her come to his office at five on Monday.

Hermione went back to her dorm to get a few things. Diane had made arrangements to talk with one of the fourth year students that evening. Harry invited Tonks to come over. They sat down. Harry said, "Big sis, can we talk for a few minutes?"

“Sure lil, bro. What’s up?”

Harry took a breath and said, “How do witches and wizards get married?”

Tonks squeezed his arm. “In most cases, they’re not church weddings. Usually they are done in someone’s back garden. For famous kick arse wizards like you, Hogwarts might be a wonderful place to have it. Not knowing how many people that Hermione’s parents would invite, there would most likely be enough room. Some witches have two ceremonies, a wizarding one and a muggle one, depending on the circumstances. In some cases memory charms or illusions are used, to keep the more overtly wizarding things hidden. Has the subject come up yet, or are you just doing a bit of prep work?”

“Prep work. Who performs the ceremonies?”

“Any member of the Wizengamot is eligible to. It has more of a legal focus than the traditional church weddings like lady Diana had. How specific are your wedding plans at this time lil bro?”

“I don’t know. Hermione hasn’t said anything, but I am certain that it will come up over the Christmas holidays. I’ve never been to a wedding.”

“You may want to have a similar discussion with Molly sometime. Here is my best advice. You should smile and agree to everything Hermione suggests. Wizards get married. Witches have weddings. When the time comes, plan a month long honeymoon for the two of you. Go on a cruise, or to a tropical island. That can be your contribution to the planning process.”

“Thanks sis.”

Tonks sat silently for a moment then spoke. “Harry...Hermione isn’t...?”

Harry’s face turned red as if on cue. “No.”

"I'm sorry I asked. You two know better. I'll see you tomorrow lil bro."
She gave him a friendly kiss on the cheek.

"Don't be sorry. Thanks sis."

That Sunday evening the Order meeting was held in Harry's classroom. Dumbledore made that decision for several reasons. The stated reason was that the larger space would more comfortably accommodate the larger group. He was expecting between thirty and forty members that evening. The unstated reason was to begin the transition of raising Harry's status within the group into the leadership role.

When everyone had arrived, he began. "Last Saturday we faced the largest contingent of dark forces that has gathered in fifty years. It is my great pleasure to say that we prevailed. To best illustrate the situation, I will ask Harry to share his memory of that afternoon with us. Before he does, I wish to note that this was not a lucky reaction to an event, rather a carefully orchestrated proactive plan. Harry trained several students and staff to be able to cast a defensive spell against the dementors. He scouted the area for appropriate lookout points and escape routes. Our goal was to protect the 350 students that were visiting the shops of Hogsmeade that day. As you will see, our goals were exceeded.

Harry began the memory, Bang. Harry looked around one more time and flew into town. Out of the forest came a wave of Dementors. Harry used the Sonorus charm to magnify his voice. "Everyone get into one of the buildings." The streets cleared. Harry pulled the sword, and cried "Expecto Patronum." A huge stag emerged. He cast the charm over and over. ... The heads of houses did a count as quickly as they could. All of the students were accounted for. All of the staff had been accounted for. Dumbledore looked around for a moment then asked, "Harry, where is Tonks?"

When at last the smoky images shrunk back into the bowl of the pensive, there was stunned silence. Even the few who had seen the

memory before marveled at what they had witnessed, perhaps more so the second time. Mrs. Weasley commented that she had never seen such an orderly evacuation of a town. She added with a warm smile, "So which of my children did you save this time?" There were a few chuckles around the room.

"Harry smiled. "Ginny took care of herself quite well. I think Ron must have been in Honeydukes."

"Actually, he was in the Hog's Head," said Aberforth.

"After the part that he showed us, he went back to save Tonks," said Molly Malkin.

"Harry saved me all right. I was trying to leg it away from those monsters. Cor- blimey, I was a moment away from getting snogged by one of those beasts. Harry flew up and summoned me to his broom and saved me again."

Harry could see it coming and covered his face.

"Mind you, my bum was black and blue by the time that he got through with me." There were quite a few louder sniggers and chuckles this time.

Poppy came to Harry's aid. "Well Tonks, I've been teaching Harry some healing spells. Perhaps you would like to have him take a look at it." She winked at Harry.

"The story gets better with every telling," said Harry. Everyone laughed.

Arthur spoke. "Harry without revealing anything that is too secret, how did you do those things, or more basically asked, what were those things?"

Harry looked around the table then spoke. "I have been taking lessons in Occlumency for a year now, so I can somewhat protect myself against their negative thought projections. I believe that the dementors are using a form of Legilimency to cause their victims to

relive their worst memories. I also have been working a lot on strengthening my spell casting. That was the first time that my Patronus form destroyed a dementor rather than just chase it. One of the teachers has been helping me learn the basics of swordsmanship. That is about it.”

Bill asked, “How did you know that man was Pettigrew?”

A grim frown flashed on Harry’s face. “I have seen him several times in the past. I was certain that it was Pettigrew. I saw him receive his silver hand the night Voldemort came back.” Most of the Order shuddered at the thought.

Victor asked, “Were you too quick to pass judgment on Wormtail?”

“You’ll have to decide that. It is my belief that he directly or indirectly:

Aided in the murder of my parents

Killed thirteen people

Caused Order member Sirius Black to be falsely imprisoned for twelve years

Killed Cedric Diggory in front of my eyes

Attempted to murder Mundungus

Built the bomb that blew up the joke shop

Attempted to murder Remus Lupin

Harry concluded. “Pettigrew gave no more thought to killing our friend Cedric than we would about scratching our ear.” Tears welled in Amos’ eyes at the mention of how casually his son was murdered.

Dumbledore spoke. “This battle has been reviewed with Director Bones. She found no evidence of wrongdoing what so ever on Harry’s part.”

Victor spoke again. "I did not know that you knew him so well. I meant no disrespect by what I said earlier."

"No worries."

The second part of the meeting was more tactical than the first half. Dumbledore started the meeting again. "We are developing a plan to try and destroy the remaining dementors. It will involve some level of risk and will be on a volunteer only basis. In short we will try and create two or three situations that might tempt Voldemort to attack. It is our hope to reduce the very significant threat from these creatures without causing undo risk to our forces."

He continued. "The first item is to set up a situation where a large number of dementors make an attack on Hogsmeade village at a time when we are not distracted by our obligations to protect 350 students. Our forces would battle any Death Eaters while Harry focused on the dementors."

Bill asked, "Why would Voldemort attack the same village twice? Stated differently, how could he convince the dementors to stage another attack at a site where they just lost half of their number?"

Dumbledore replied, "We would set up a target that Voldemort would see as all but irresistible, and create the impression that Harry would be gone for the week end."

Moody asked, "What is the risk that the village would be attacked by a larger force than we may be envisioning?"

"It is an absolute certainty that he will not send what he believes an undersized attacking army. He may try warding the village against apparation or portkey. He would have to do that immediately preceding the attack, or it would be discovered. We think the key is to cause him to realize that there will be a relatively small number of people there."

Dumbledore continued. "It is unknown how Voldemort's recruiting efforts have progressed, or stalled. Battling a large number of

dementors as well as a sufficiently distracting quantity of Death Eaters at the same time would be difficult indeed.”

Molly asked “What is the risk of Voldemort personally taking part in the attack?”

“That is also a very real possibility. He has not taken an active part in the recent raids, instead sending a trusted lieutenant, such as Bellatrix or Peter in his place. Travers is the logical person that he would send if he did not go himself. If he does appear, it is all but certain that he will attempt to murder the entire village.” There were a few more involuntary shudders among the group.

Hestia asked, “Are there other dark creatures that he could call to his side?”

“Certainly. He could call on the giants, but the destruction of the village by a handful of misguided giants would not win him many followers.”

Amos asked, “What if he doesn’t attack as expected?”

“His followers have been taken from him. At least some of his funding has been stripped. He needs a victory to use as a recruiting tool. If the first plan does not entice him, we also have the option of dangling another prize in his face – the captured Death Eaters. For now they are out of his grasp. By the letter of wizarding law they can remain where they are for another month. In reality they are being held there indefinitely at the Queen’s pleasure.”

“What could we do to best help?” asked Amos.

“With respect to the first plan, Ms. Skeeter is in the best position to help us, as is Mr. Lovegood. Several stories will be placed about a new endeavor of Miss Granger’s that will have received funding out of the pain of Tom’s pocket. The group is called the Firstborn Society. It is a support group designed to assimilate muggleborn witches into wizarding culture. It is possible that Voldemort will see the elimination of such a group to be just the sort of target that would attract some mainstream support for his cause.”

"Anything would be a better cause than SPEW," mumbled George to Fred

Aberforth spoke. "It may not be a risk to 350 students, but it does place the villagers at risk, or at least the venue that hosts it."

"Yes it does Aberforth. I would ask you to consider accepting such a risk."

"I will help you brother, as will the 900 villagers."

Dumbledore directed the conversation back to his protégé. "Harry, what are your thoughts?"

"The remaining dementors need to have a reason to try for a repeat attack. It would be their inclination to disburse among the countryside, and hunt in small groups. I believe that this represents our best opportunity to draw them out. Hermione and I have talked about this a lot. For us to have a secure future, we need to take this or a similar action. Reacting to reported attacks would be a very slow way to hunt them down. If anyone can think of a better alternative, or improve the idea that was presented, please say something." He used his wand to pass two trays of butterbeers, coffee and tea around to the group to give them time to think. When he had given them a few minutes to think, Harry asked, "Does anyone have an idea that might work better, or have less risk?"

No one came forward.

Harry continued. "I think the next issue comes back to Minister Diggory's question regarding what resources will we need, and what resources are available to us to use. The dementors will need a large area to stage from. Realistically the hills to the north and the forest to the east are their best choices, especially if the target is the Hogs Head. A key element of the success last week was having the flyers that gave us some warning. I believe that Rolanda Hooch sounded the alarm that everyone heard. We will need an alternative of some sort. I don't see the flyers as an option this time, as it would be obvious that they were there to be sentries. They will be expecting to

attack a conference of twenty muggle born witches and their parents. If Voldemort sends all of the dementors, he would believe them to have a five to one advantage. If he only convinced half of them to go, he couldn't help but think that he had a superior force, even if he believed that a few could cast a Patronus.

Dumbledore spoke. "So the second part of the plan is that Harry is in Kent County conducting a seminar on creating a Patronus for self defense.

Victor asked, "How would Harry know that the village was under attack?"

Dumbledore started to speak, but Harry interrupted, "We will have to think that part through. If we staged a runner who could fly to an area that could be apparated from, I might be able to be notified within three to four minutes of the attack. So the people at the Hogs Head would need to be able to hold the attackers off for at least seven or eight minutes until the Aurors and I could get there. As a precaution, many of the attendees will have access to portkeys for escape. I have started the organization with 100,000 Galleons seed money that Hermione will be distributing that day." Harry looked at Hermione for the tiniest fraction of a second, urging her not to say anything.

Harry continued, "As we get a date formalized this week, and the articles published, we will be asking for your help again. Thank you for coming." Harry ended the meeting. He looked at Dumbledore for a moment, who nodded slightly. Harry found Hermione and walked her back to his room. Ten minutes later, Albus came in.

"Then you agree Harry?"

"Yes to both of them. There is no other way that he could have known the name."

Dumbledore nodded. "Miss Granger, are you certain that you are willing to place yourself at this level of risk?" Hermione answered without looking at Harry. "Yes Professor. If it will allow Harry and I to get on with our lives sooner, then the answer is yes."

“All right then. I do recommend that you leave all specific references to your parents out of the articles, to minimize the possibility that some other misguided witch or wizard would try something.”

“On a different subject, Harry, I wish to amend our original agreement to allow you to come and go as you please. Miss Granger, you will be allowed to accompany Harry whenever you wish. Perhaps you two should have lunch in Paris next weekend. Is that agreeable?”

They both smiled and nodded, amazed at the co-incidence.

“Good night Professor.”

Diane and Tonks found something else to do for the rest of the evening.

Harry met with Sir Nicolas Monday morning. Sir Nicolas spent the time showing Harry wandless casting and casting amplification techniques. Sir Nicolas used a staff, while Harry used his sword. As usual, he brought along a bundle of books and manuscripts for Harry to have. Harry thanked Sir Nicolas, who smiled and told Harry that it would be his responsibility to pass the information along to the appropriate witches and wizards of his time. They had a butterbeer together. Harry talked about how much Hermione had helped him. Sir Nicolas smiled. He asked Harry to read one of the books for the next week. Harry asked if Sir Nicolas might show him how to enchant a sword sometime. They walked outside and visited the lake for a moment, and then Sir Nicolas left.

Harry went back and carefully put the materials that Sir Nicolas had given him in his trunk. He met Diane for lunch. She had a full schedule talking with students for the week. His own classes went well. He conjured a bunch of balloons and set them loose at one end of the room. He asked the students to fire red sparks at them to improve their aim. By the end of the class he conjured a soft breeze so that the balloons were moving.

At five he met Pansy in his office. She asked him what had happened at the Grangers. Harry told her. He told her that he had seen the interrogation documents and what they contained. She asked him about Narcissa. Harry told her what he had read in the Daily Prophet. He told her that he had last seen her at the trial for the bombing of the joke shop. She thought about what he had said for a moment. "I liked Draco, but I didn't agree with his politics or methods. We broke up late last winter after he had taken the Mark, and I wouldn't. She showed Harry her arms. They were clean. "I had heard that Mrs. Malfoy had been beaten and raped before he killed her. It was a crappy way to spend the last hour of your life. I don't want that for myself."

Harry fought back the bile that was collecting in his throat. That was a crappy way to spend the last hour of your life. Refocusing, he asked, "What do you want to do with your life Pansy? You could do anything that you would like. You could be a healer, a solicitor, do potions research, or find a decent guy and raise great kids."

Pansy looked at Harry for a moment, knew that knew was being sincere and smiled. "I like to write, and I like to visit with people. Maybe I could work at a newspaper."

"I have an idea. Why don't you write a page or two about what it is like this year at school? I know some people at the Prophet and the Quibbler. I would show it to both of them, and maybe one or the other would publish it. Would that be OK?"

Pansy looked shocked. "Would you really do that for me?"

"Yes. If either publisher likes your work, I would be happy to introduce you to them this or next Saturday. OK?"

Pansy looked Harry in the eye. "Thank you Harry. I really mean it."

"You are very welcome. Enjoy your evening."

In his fourth and fifth year defense class he asked Poppy to demonstrate healing of minor cuts. She had brought a few of the practice mannequins that Harry had worked with. By the end of the

class most of the students were able to heal a minor cut. They all thanked Harry and Poppy for helping them with the practice.

In the sixth and seventh year classes, he practiced defensive moves and blocks. They didn't know any exotic spells or moves, but everyone could perform the basics. The students who were also in the DA group could probably hold their own against, or beat nearly half of the Death Eaters that they had met at the Department of Mysteries last June. Susan Bones shared the big box of chocolate bars that the villagers had sent her with the rest of the class.

His evening classes were going well. While Harry preferred to conjure an object to transfiguring something else, McGonagall told him that a transfigured object would be permanent. "Sometimes it isn't about making an object so much as getting rid of something else." Harry was reminded of Barty Crouch Jr.'s confession that he had transfigured the body of his father into a bone, and nodded darkly. After the lesson, Minerva was reminded of the two wooden chairs that Harry had conjured over the summer that she and Dumbledore had put away in one of the classrooms. Out of curiosity she went the room to see if they were still there. She found them where they had been left. Except for being dust covered, they looked new. She picked one up. It felt as solid as any chair. She cleaned the dust off and sat on it. The chair was absolutely solid. "Amazing," she muttered. "Perhaps one wizard in a few thousand could conjure permanent objects this well."

Harry and Hermione left early on Saturday and went to visit Remus at St. Mungo's. He was looking better. The Healers there had been giving him a lot of occupational therapy. They discussed the plans for the 26th. Harry said that he would deliver the needed materials next Saturday. Harry advised Remus not to say anything to anyone outside of the close circle, and to keep a close eye for unusual visitors or packages. Harry told him that if they sent anything to him it would have Hermione Potter as the sender.

They came back from visiting Remus and split up for an hour. Hermione went to see Professor McGonagall. Harry found Diane. "If

you have some, time, I would be delighted to take you flying this morning.” They put on jackets and walked out the door. Harry had Diane sit in front. He took her over the lake, up the hills over Hogsmeade on a slow and gentle ride flying at about 300 feet. From time to time, they would see someone on the ground who waved at them. Diane finally got to the comfort point where she would take one hand off, and kind of wave back. They flew back to the castle.

Diane got off the broom and hugged Harry. “Thanks for inviting me Harry. I was embarrassed to keep asking you.”

He smiled at her. “Don’t be embarrassed. I love to go flying with you.”

“Thanks. I really mean it. It has meant a lot to me to get to know a bit about my heritage. I need to go visit a student now. Thanks again.”

Harry put his broom away and met up with Hermione. She was wearing a skinny gray sweater and jeans. Harry changed into jeans and a sweater. He brought some cash along with him and met back with Hermione.

They went to the fireplace in Harry’s office. Hermione said, “We can floo from here. You need to say Musee du Louvre. Let’s practice. Musee du Louvre. Ok, I’ll go first. Musee du Louvre.” She was gone.

Harry threw a bit of floo powder in the fireplace and said “Musee du Louvre.” Five seconds later he was on his arse on a stone hearth. Hermione helped him up.

The attendant suppressed a laugh and asked them their names. Hermione answered his questions speaking in perfect French. The smirk vanished from his face. She gave the attendant a small bill for the toll, and they were on their way.

“I hate traveling by floo,” said Harry, his pride injured more than anything else. “Where to?”

“I’ve been here before. Let’s just walk around and see the sights. When we get hungry, we can find someplace to eat. Next time, we will have both been here so we can just apparate.” They walked out

of the museum and along the river for an hour or so enjoying the sights and each other's company. They found a sidewalk café. Hermione ordered for them. Harry was not familiar with the food, but it was very good. After finishing their meal, they walked for another hour, or so. Hermione showed him where they were on the little map that she had brought with her. "I exchanged some galleons for French notes from Professor McGonagall. I never knew that she handled the business affairs for the school."

Harry nodded. "She's very good at the business affairs of the school. I like going to Paris for lunch with you Miss Granger. You think of everything."

"Have you ever been to France before Harry?"

"No. To be honest, before Hogwarts, I had only been out of Surrey County one time to go to London for an afternoon. I think I was six. This is the first time I have been out of Britain. For the most part, my life began the first time I took the Hogwarts express. That was the day I met you."

She kissed his cheek. "That's so sweet. Of course you didn't like me when you first met me."

"I didn't know you then. You were going on about Neville's toad or something. We're very different people today than we were then. You're the kindest person that I could ever meet. You are so beautiful. I have so much respect for you, your compassion, and your abilities. I feel like the luckiest man on Earth."

"Why thank you Mr. Potter. The years have been kind to you too. Is it Christmas yet?"

"Almost. I wish it was."

"It's getting dark. We should probably get back." They found a quiet street and vanished. They apparated back to the train station and walked back to the castle.

“Thank you for a great day Hermione. I really had fun going with you. Paris is fantastic!”

They met Ron while walking back to the castle. “Where have you two been?”

Hermione said, “We just went for a walk. Why?”

“I had been looking for you, that’s all.”

Harry said, “Would you and Luna like to come over in an hour? Seamus and Susan are coming too.”

“Sure. What about Ginny and Neville?”

“Fine. We will see you then.”

Hermione went with Harry. They put away everything that was the least out of the ordinary. There was no inquisition this time. Everyone was a lot more respectful of Harry’s teaching role. They had a nice visit. Harry made eleven pizzas. It was something of a contest between Seamus and Ron who would eat the most. In the end, the master won out. Susan asked why Harry had two trunks. Harry said that the other one had belonged to his parents, but that he had never opened it. They talked for a while about what they might want to do after school.

Neville wanted to be a herbologist. Everyone thought that he would be fantastic at it.

“Where would you work?” asked Hermione.

“Most likely either at the St. Mungo’s research center, or at one of the apothecaries.”

“How about you Susan?” asked Hermione.

“I would like to do the same sort of work that your friend Diane does. She really helped me a lot, and the wizarding world has such a need

for that sort of thing. Auntie is seeing about getting me admitted to Cambridge after school.”

“How about you Hermione?” asked Susan.

I’d like to do some volunteer work, transitioning muggle born witches into the wizarding world, and start what I hope is a very large family. The first born witch is at such a disadvantage when they start school. This would be an opportunity to provide basic wizarding culture knowledge for their families. Maybe there could be some sort of prep class for the families, a two-week immersion class if you would. It is a two way shock for an incoming student, the loss of their technology and all of the wizarding world culture.”

“Ron, have you talked with anyone at the Canons?” asked Harry.

“I have written them, but have not heard back yet. How about you?”

“I’d like to continue here, and find a way to help Susan’s aunt from time to time. I’m also quite interested in helping Hermione achieve her goals. The women looked at each other, and started giggling. Ron looked clueless. “What about you Luna?” asked Harry.

“I think I’ll help daddy at the newspaper. I am also quite interested in Arithmancy, particularly in spell modification research.”

Harry asked, “What about you Ginny?”

“I’d like to start a witches fashion business.”

“What would you need to start it?”

“Contacts, capital, and a lot more drawings.”

Harry said, “When you are ready, I can help you with the first two. Just let me know what you need. Ron there is more pizza if you would like.” Luna and Hermione shook their heads in disbelief as he took another two pieces.

Neville asked, “Seamus, what about you?”

Their Irish friend scratched his head. "I don't rightly know. I kind of see things the way Hermione does only in reverse. I think it is the typical witch or wizard that's woefully unprepared to function in the muggle world. The muggle studies class here is a joke. No offense meant, Professor, but I think you know what I mean. PC, and DVD are just five letters to 90 of the students here."

Harry replied, "Talk to me a year from this spring."

For Harry, this had been one of the best days that he could remember. For a day, the weight of the wizarding world had been off his shoulders. He remembered Hermione's letter from last summer, and smiled. He was a very lucky man. As the others said their good nights he realized what it meant to truly live. If the prophecy was correct, this is what he had to look forward to after he got rid of Voldemort.

On Sunday, Harry and Hermione portkeyed Diane back to her home. After they had hugged and said their goodbyes, Harry and Hermione apparated to Hermione's parents to have lunch. Dan and Emma were surprised, but delighted to see their daughter and Harry. Dan went out side to light the grill. Emma said, "This is so much better than getting a call. How has your first month gone?"

Hermione said, "Classes are going really well this year. We have a new potions professor, Dr. Chang. He is a much better teacher than Professor Snape ever was. He actually teaches the theory, not just the recipe. Astronomy is going well. Arithmancy and Ancient Runes are quite difficult, but we are really learning a lot. We will begin the unit on conjuring objects in transfiguration after Christmas break in Transfiguration."

"That sounds good. How is your year going Harry?"

"I've learned a lot in my different tutoring sessions. The finance classes that the goblins teach are really quite interesting. The other teachers, Professor Dumbledore, Healer Pomfrey, and the Aurors have gone way out of their way to help me."

Harry continued. "I like my job. I'm starting to learn how to teach. I've been reading quite a few books on education theory, and have a great opportunity to improve my teaching skills. The students have accepted my new role much better than I thought that they would. I think Hermione may have had something to do with that, but she hasn't said."

Emma said, "It sounds like a lot of the students had the opportunity to practice the lessons that you had taught."

Hermione was ready for this. "Mum, these horrible creatures showed up..."

Emma cut her off. "I'd like to hear it from Harry first."

Harry explained that they had taken precautions in the event of an attack during the first Hogsmede weekend. He talked about ensuring that a number of the students knew the defensive charm, and the posting of lookouts. He told her about the creation of the portkeys to provide a safe escape for the students.

Emma softened somewhat. "What was the result?"

"Of the 350 students that went, there were four injuries. Cho fell off of her broom while on lookout. Susan fell over another student using a portkey to get back to school. My friend Remus was attacked by a Death Eater and lost an arm, and one of the Aurors received a bad bruise. A lot of kids got pretty scared, but everyone did exactly what they were supposed to do."

Emma nodded. "What were you doing during all of this?"

"I helped a few kids to safety and performed first aid on Remus."

"Mum, what are you getting at?"

"Diane sent me the newspaper clippings. They made it sound like Harry saved the entire village."

Hermione looked at her mother and calmly said, "He did. First he made certain that I would be safe. He made certain that all of the students were safe. He saved Remus' life and he destroyed some of those creatures."

"Ninety six is not 'some' Hermione. Who was that man Harry?"

"Peter Pettigrew was a wizard who had murdered many witches wizards and regular people. He betrayed my parents sixteen years ago causing their deaths. He helped plan the attack on your home, the bombing of the joke shop, and a lot of really bad things in between."

"Harry and Hermione please don't make me drag information out of you both. Harry, I appreciate that you took Dan's words to heart, and made certain that everyone was safe. Please believe me when I say that I'm not prying into every detail of your life, but we just want to know what's going on."

Harry nodded, not sure what to say.

Hermione changed the subject. "Harry took me to Paris for lunch yesterday."

"Really. How did you get there? Did you use one of those portkey devices?"

"No. We used the floo network to get there and apparated back. Watch this." Hermione walked to the end of the living room. POP she was standing next to her mother. "I got my license a month ago. Harry taught me."

"Brilliant. That is truly amazing! You can go from one spot to anywhere?"

Hermione answered, "It helps if you have been there, or can visualize the place that you are trying to get to. I was reading about apparating to a map location, but that sounds pretty hard."

Emma was very impressed. "That's fantastic dear. How long did it take to get there?"

Harry answered. "The floo takes about half a minute. Apparation is a lot faster. That really only takes a second or two. It takes a little longer if you are carrying another person."

Emma marveled at the light magic that they were describing. "That's amazing. Harry, did you really fly Diane around on your broomstick?"

Harry turned slightly red. "Yes. What did she say?"

"She said if you ever offer me a ride to take you up on it. She said it was the most fun that she had ever had doing anything, bar none."

"Oh. She did seem to enjoy it."

They finished their lunch, and went back to school. Dan hugged Hermione and Emma hugged Harry. Dan said, "Learn a lot of things, have fun, and stay safe. We love you both."

Harry and Hermione said, "We love you too. Bye." They waved. Dan looked again. The kids were gone.

Monday came. Harry got up and ran. After breakfast he went to his classroom. Sir Nicolas met him a few minutes later. "Harry might I use your pensive?" Harry went to get it, and returned a few minutes later.

Sir Nicolas gazed into Harry's eye. "I apologize for not being as prepared this morning as I might have been. I have a few memories that I would like to give you." He withdrew strand after strand and placed them into Harry's pensive. He handed Harry a large bundle of papers. "Harry, I regret to tell you that this is the last time that I will be able to come to see you. My time is getting quite short, and I have a number of affairs to get in order. I did leave you a number of manuscripts on topics that you may have an interest in. Please keep them safe."

He continued. "Harry, I do have a request to ask of you. I would like to spend a few minutes visiting with your friend, Hermione." Harry summoned Dobby, who went to get Hermione. She arrived in Harry's class within minutes.

"Hermione, I am Nicolas Flamel. Harry has said many nice things about you, and I wanted to meet you. I have a bit of perspective that I would like to share with you, and now seems to be the time to do it. Harry, if you could return in an hour, we will finish our lesson."

Harry walked outside. It was a sunny October day. Harry had a butterbeer on the front lawn, watching the birds and the leaves. The sun peeked through the clouds hinting at what could be a fine afternoon. After an hour he went back in.

Nicolas was finishing his conversation with Hermione as Harry returned. "My Parenelle was such a fine women. She has been waiting for me for a year now. She had a great intellect and a good heart like you. Take care of each other." Hermione gave Nicolas a hug and she left.

"Harry, there is a last lesson that I would like to show you myself". He demonstrated how to turn invisible. He reappeared a few moments later. "It really is a variation on apparation. The difference is that you separate the disapparation from the reapparation aspects. In between you have the ability to walk unnoticed. Read the manuscript, and I am certain that you will be able to do it with a few hours practice. If you would, I would like to borrow your pensive one more time." He withdrew a few more strands and placed them in Harry's bowl.

"If you would do me the kindness of walking me up to see Albus, I would appreciate it."

As they walked, Nicolas told Harry that he had enjoyed the opportunity to have a student who enjoyed learning, and wasn't already full of misconceptions. At the gargoyle, Nicolas took Harry's hand and said, "This is where we will part. I wish you as much success and happiness in your life as you desire. Fare well Harry." He climbed the stairs and was gone. Harry went back to his

classroom, gathered up the bundle of parchments and his pensive. He carefully sealed the pensive and carried both back to his room

Harry's evening class that night was similar to the summer session that he had during the summer with the tennis balls. In this case he was to transfigure the tennis ball into water before it hit him. Harry was much better at this wandlessly than with his wand. As a result he was soaked at the end of the session. Minerva kidded him. "After you transfigured the ball, you might have considered ducking or getting out of the way. Seriously, well done, Harry." She waved her hand and dried him off. "Don't look at me so strange. I never said that I couldn't do wandless magics. I simply do not possess the power or dexterity with them that you do. I could float my tin of biscuits into the air easily enough, but getting them onto your palm is about my limit. I heard that you healed Remus without your wand and did it perfectly. I couldn't do that on my best day."

"Minerva, I want to thank you very much for taking the time each week to help me. Can we visit for a while?"

She realized immediately that this was not a normal comment from Harry. "Of course. What's on your mind?"

Harry had a hard time with the words. "I expect to face Voldemort before the year is up. If things ... don't work out, I'd like you to keep an eye on Hermione for me."

The anxiety was just flowing off him. Minerva wanted to give him an answer without minimizing what he had just tried to say. With a great amount of honest respect for the young man she said, "I would be honored to Harry, but there will be no need. I am certain that you will prevail. She looked him in the eye for a minute, with her thin lips almost vanishing. Harry, I will give you a piece of advice. When the time comes, face him on your terms, not his."

Harry nodded. "I will remember that. Thank you Professor, for everything."

Potions Wednesday evening with Dr. Chang compared to Snape was a different as Hagrid's pet dogs Fang and Fluffy. Dr. Chang took the time to explain the background of a potion, the theory behind the combination of ingredients and gave advice on judging the quality of the finished product. He reviewed every potion that Harry had ever made, and explained the missing gaps in Harry's knowledge of the subject. After a month, they were ready to proceed to new material. Having understood the background, Harry progressed at remarkable speed. Dr. Chang told Harry that he was having similar results with most of the fifth, sixth and seventh year students. He gave Harry several books to read on the chemistry and biology behind the ingredients. It provided a lot of the "Why and How" answers to questions that Snape had never allowed in his class. Harry thanked Dr. Chang, who said, Harry, "My family will always be in your debt. A few books are nothing compared to Cho's life. In the next lesson, we will take up training with the sword again. I see a mastery of that tool as helping you with your destiny."

Friday - 18 October

On Friday the Daily Prophet carried a small article on page 5.

Firstborn Society helps Assimilate Muggle Born Witches

Story by Rita Skeeter

Hermione Granger announced the formation of the Firstborn Society – a group of firstborn witches (children of muggles) that have achieved excellence in their fields, demonstrating that hard work and ability, not heritage ultimately will determine success in the wizarding world. The group is chartered to help firstborn witches and their muggle parents assimilate more easily into the wizarding world culture. Miss Granger currently the top student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is quoted as saying, “I am very proud of my parents. I am equally proud to be a witch. I look forward to starting what I hope is a large family with my fiancé Harry Potter.” The first meeting will be held at the Hogs Head conference center in Hogsmeade on Saturday 26 October at 1 PM.

As it was on page five of the Daily Prophet, most of the students had not read the article. At the Ministry, Percy Weasley and Amelia Bones had both noticed the article. Neither one mentioned it to the other.

In his morning class, Harry was dueling Kingsley, Hestia, and Tonks. All of these people were absolutely loyal to the cause. Harry did not have to hide secrets from them. He said “This duel will be over when I have tapped each of you on the back of the neck.” After a few minutes Harry disappeared. Harry apparated behind Hestia and tapped her neck. He immediately disappeared.

Harry appeared absolutely silently behind Kingsley. Kingsley saw Harry’s shadow appear and managed to move before Harry could get him. “Good try Potter. I didn’t hear a thing. Watch your shadow.” Harry drew his sword with the protective covering over it. He tapped Tonks on the back of the head with it, and disappeared. Harry tried a misdirection. He appeared and conjured a pebble to toss in front of Kingsley. He appeared a foot behind Kingsley and wandlessly transfigured Kingsley’s wand into a snake. Kingsley turned to his right.

“Potter that’s not funny. That was my good” (tap) “Shite.” Harry transfigured Kingsley’s wand back.

Kingsley sat down. “Lets take a break. How long can you stay invisible like that?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never tried it for more than a few minutes.”

“Can Moody see you when you do that?”

“He says that he can’t.”

“I couldn’t hear a thing when you reappeared. I could see your shadow, so you may want to keep that in mind. What do you want to learn about next time?”

“I’d like to learn to shoot a handgun. Do you still have those .45 Automatics that Remus and I gave you?”

“Yes, but they’re illegal.”

“So is ordering two hundred dementors to wipe out a village.”

“Good point. I’ll see you next Thursday in the rock quarry. Don’t bring this up to anyone.”

OK. Thanks. Thank you Tonks. Thank you Hestia. Thanks Kingsley.”

That night at dinner, Pansy was the first to get in line to sit at Harry’s table. She handed him the parchment that she’d written for her newspaper article. Harry looked at it.

A Better Year at Hogwarts

Story by Pansy Parkinson

The changes at Hogwarts this year have all been for the better. Dr. Wo Pei Chang has made a lot of improvements to the daily teaching

of potions. He has been taking the time to explain how and why the chemistries work the way that they do. This has been helpful to all of the students regardless of their skill level or background. The changes that he has brought about as head of Slytherin house have all been positive as well. He's done a lot to give us our pride back, distinguishing the attributes of hard work and ambition from heritage or dark magic. He rewards us and disciplines us fairly.

The changes in the Defense Against the Dark Arts class have all been positive too. With the teaching staff consisting of Professor Alastor Moody, Professor Remus Lupin, and Professor Harry Potter, we're getting the best possible instruction. We have also have guest lectures delivered by members of the Ministry Auror team. The results of the lessons that we have had were evident a week ago when Voldemort ordered the attack on the wizarding village of Hogsmede by those disgusting dementors. I personally saw Susan Bones cast a Patronus charm that chased some of the dementors away, which allowed a lot of the students and me to get to safety. That was a charm that we are starting to learn about this month in Harry's class. The class has been very beneficial.

"This looks really good Pansy. I am seeing the Editor of the Quibbler tomorrow morning. Can I give this to him from you?"

"It would be really great if you would do that. Thank you very much."

"Pansy, I am glad to help you get started. It might be a little bit longer than what he has room for, so he might need to cut a line, or two. I'm sure that he will read it and like it. He probably will ask you for another article for a later issue too."

"Thank you Harry."

Harry left dinner and went to the hospital wing for his healing lesson. The lesson that he got that night was one that he hoped he would never have to use – how to attempt to restart a heart that had stopped beating. Poppy started with a quick overview of the biology of a heart, keeping in mind that Harry would be using this as advanced first aid. As such she kept the theory parts to a minimum. Poppy told him that a heart may stop for a number of reasons – a

person drowning, shock, a severe injury, myocardial infarction commonly called a heart attack. "Muggles try to massage the heart to get it started, or sometimes provide an electrical stimulation to get it started. The spell that I will show you will cause a stopped heart to beat for a minute. During that time hopefully the body will get the heart rhythm working on its own. You could cast it a time or two on a dying person, and possibly save them." Harry tried it several times on the practice mannequins that they had used a few weeks before. Poppy showed Harry several places on the body to check for heartbeat. "If you want to practice it, come up and use the mannequins any time that you need to."

Thank you Poppy. I will see you Sunday evening, if not sooner.

Harry had a lot of stops to make on Saturday. The first was to visit Remus. Harry delivered the package to him. "Are you sure that you're up to this?"

Remus smiled. "I'll be fine. However it will be hard matching your energy level for an entire day."

"I can't help you with that. There should be enough potion for about six hours. You can say that my working with Moody has started to rub off. It will probably get you a laugh or two. Moody will watch your back. It's a friendly audience. There really is only one potential person that you'll have to fool."

Harry continued. "There's only one fly in the ointment. I'll go with you and start the class. At the first break we can switch. I'll have demonstrated my Patronus form in the first session. From there you can work on memory selections. Moody will cast his form on a demonstration basis after that. Our wands don't look too different, so I don't think that there will be a problem."

"What if they have placed an anti-apparation ward around the village by the time you are ready to get there?"

"I don't think that will be a problem. The meeting isn't scheduled to start until one. I would expect an attack to take place somewhere between two and five. That would mean that any potential spy would have had to make their move by noon or one to give the attackers time to stage the attack. I'll watch him at the first break. Just schedule a late lunch and see if he steps out. Moody can keep an eye out for him."

"Bad humor never changes does it?"

"No. I suppose not, but it'll be nice of you to lend me a hand. Keep in mind Harry, it's likely that you will be on your own for at least five minutes until help arrives. A lot can happen in five minutes."

"Moony...Seriously, if you change your mind, or something doesn't feel right, let me know."

"OK. I'll see you on Saturday. We'll meet at the Training Center at 8:30."

Harry went back to Hogwarts to collect Hermione. Their next stop was to see Mr. and Mrs. Weasley then stop to see Mr. Lovegood. They apparated to the Weasley back garden. Molly was out in the garden feeding the gnomes. There seemed to have been some improvements made to the house. "Hello dears."

Harry saw her and waved. "Hi Mrs. Weasley. We just dropped by to say hi."

"That's lovely. Please come in." They walked in and sat at the scrubbed wooden table in the kitchen. "Hermione, Ron said that you passed your Apparitation test. Congratulations. I read about you in the Daily Prophet the other day. That group sounds like a wonderful idea. Harry, how are Ron and Ginny doing in class? They aren't misbehaving are they?"

Harry said, "They both are doing well in my class. Actually no one has misbehaved in my class yet this year."

"That's good to hear. How's your year going dear?"

Hermione said, "Arithmancy is quite interesting so far. We are working on spell modification on multipart spells. Potions is so much better this year, and of course everyone likes the new format for the Defense class."

Harry said, "I ran into Percy the other day. I hadn't heard that he was working with Director Bones."

"Yes. He thought it would be a more interesting area, and requested a transfer late in June. He seems to like it."

Harry nodded, keeping a pleasantly interested look on his face. "That's interesting. You should have seen Ron last Saturday. He did a great job as Keeper. He should try out for one of the pro teams."

Hermione said, "Mrs. Weasley, we need to get going. We have a few more stops to make. It was great to see you."

"It was great to see you two. Please keep any eye on Ginny and Ron for me, won't you?"

"I will. Thanks for the tea."

They apparated into the edge of Ottery St. Catchpole, and walked to the office of the Quibbler. They found Mr. Lovegood in the back working on one of his large mechanical newspaper presses. He saw them and walked over, wiping his hands on a rag that he had in his shop apron.

"Hello Mr. Potter. Miss, I don't believe that we have met. I'm Odd Lovegood. Perhaps you have met my daughter Luna. She's about your age."

Harry said, "I'm sorry Odd, this is my fiancé, Hermione Granger."

Suppressing a smile over the appropriateness of his name, Hermione said, "I'm pleased to meet you sir. Luna and I are friends. We're having dinner together tonight."

“Excellent. How can I help you both?”

“I have another installment for you. I also have another short piece that I would like you to run. I just have one small change to it first.” Harry drew a line over several of the sentences. “It would be very helpful if you could include this in this week’s issue.”

“I would be more than happy to help you Mr. Potter. You have done so much to help Luna and me. He read through both pieces. That is P A N S Y correct?”

“Yes. Thank you very much. Odd, may we use your floo?”

“Of course. Help yourself.”

They ended up outside the stadium of the Chudley Canons. “Shite.” Harry picked himself up from the floor. Hermione suppressed a giggle.

“Come here.” She brushed him off, straightened his robes and kissed his nose. “You look good. Where to?”

“I was hoping that you could wait for me here for just a few minutes. I need to talk to a guy, and he’d be a lot more comfortable if it was just him and me.”

“OK.”

Harry walked off. Ten minutes later he returned. “Thanks Hermione. I’m sorry to have kept you waiting.”

“What was that about?”

“I met with the owner of the Chudley Canons. I asked him to give Ron a tryout for the team the next time that they held tryouts. Please don’t say anything to him. I wouldn’t want him to know.”

“Harry, that was a really nice thing to do. You did the same thing for Pansy Parkinson, didn’t you?”

“Yes. In her case, I am hoping that if she gets a career going, she will be a lot less susceptible to bad influences. A lot of people have helped me through the years. I just feel that I should be doing the same. It is sort of like your great idea about the Firstborn society. I realize that we originally thought it up for a different reason, but I think it is a fantastic idea! The Slytherin kids had a much easier time than we did at first because they had grown up with magic. I’m sure it would have made things a lot easier on Dan and Emma if they had other parents that they could have talked with.”

“Harry, I’d really like to do that. Where to next?”

“I was hoping to take you to lunch? Where would you like to go? Paris, Crawley, Diagon Alley, London or Hogsmeade?”

Hermione squeezed his arm. “Actually, I’d love any of them if I was with you. Perhaps we should go to the Hogs Head Inn and see the meeting room.”

“OK. We can go to Paris next Sunday.”

No one would use the words tidy and Hogs Head Inn in the same sentence. It was as crusty as Harry and Hermione remembered. Aberforth showed them the bar, the back room, and the meeting room. Harry sealed the door. They agreed on the signals that they would use. Aberforth wished them both luck and went back to the bar.

On Thursday, Harry met with Kingsley in the stone quarry by the school. “Harry, the .45 Automatic is an outstanding weapon. The slug is quite wide and heavy. The bullets that you are using today are jacked hollow points.” He handed Harry a bullet that he had taken apart for demonstration purposes. The outside of the slug had a thin copper casing. The inside was lead. The slug had a hollowed front about the depth and width of a pencil eraser. “The diameter will expand upon impact as the slug flattens.” Kingsley conjured a football-sized pumpkin and set it on the ground about twenty feet in front of Harry. Kingsley showed Harry how to use a two handed hold, with his right hand on the grip, and his left hand over the right. “Keep

your finger off of the trigger until you are ready to fire. Focus on the front sight and fire a round into the pumpkin by squeezing the trigger.” Harry lined up the weapon using a two handed grip. He fired a round at the pumpkin. BANG!!! The noise was as loud as anything that Harry had ever heard. Kingsley smiled at his shock. “That’s why I had you put on the hearing protection. OK, now put the pistol down on the table. Go look at your target.” Harry saw a hole the width of his index finger in the front of the pumpkin. What surprised him was there was no longer a back half of the pumpkin! Kingsley demonstrated how to fire a three shot burst with the weapon, maintaining the sighting between the shots. “Be certain that you are sighted correctly for your first round. Re-sight your weapon before you fire your second shot. The point is to hit your target. Missing eight times quickly will not help you achieve your objective.” Bang, Bang, Bang. The next pumpkin was mush. Harry practiced safe handling, loading, and firing the weapon until the lesson was over two hours later. Kingsley gave Harry an extra box of ammunition, a shoulder holster, and told him to lock the weapon up in his trunk. While not an expert by any means, Harry was confident that he could hit a target that he was aiming at.

Dumbledore walked up to Harry as he entered the castle. “Harry after you have locked that away in your trunk, I would like to have lunch with you in my office.”

Harry walked to the gargoyle by Dumbledore’s office. It stepped aside. Harry walked to the circular stairs that began moving like an escalator when he stepped on the first step. Dobby had set the table in the conference room for two. Dobby had made pepperoni pizza exactly the way that Harry liked it and had a tray of iced butterbeers. Dumbledore’s side was set with a green salad and a large mug of cocoa.

The two men sat down and began their lunch. After a few minutes, Dumbledore spoke. “I may not have mentioned it before Harry, I killed Grindelwald some 52 years ago this month. I shot him with an American .45 auto, much like the one that you were practicing with this morning. I shot him eight times. It helped end a greater struggle. I’m not certain that I could have beaten him in a wizards duel. He was a master at creating shields against spells.”

Dumbledore sipped his hot chocolate. "It's very likely that there will be casualties and injuries this weekend. I can only hope that you prevail and that the casualties are few. Who has offered to stand with you?"

"Fred and George, Hermione and Tonks, Hestia and Susan, and three of the other Aurors. Remus offered to, but he will be at the training session in Kent along with Kingsley and Moody. Amelia will have a team of Aurors and Healers ready when we call."

Dumbledore nodded. "I'll alert Poppy this evening. The old wizard put down his cocoa. "Harry this will be my last year as Headmaster at Hogwarts. Like Sir Nicolas, my time is also coming to an end. While I have several wishes for you, I am not sure that they are in harmony with each other."

I would like you to rid the world of Tom and his followers

I would like you to be headmaster at the school beginning next year

I would like you to help the wizarding world embrace modern technologies

I would like you to marry Hermione and have at least six children when you are ready

I would like you both to enjoy each day of your lives

I would like you to lead the Order of the Phoenix as soon as you wish to

"You have much to live for. Therefore, I formally request that you prevail over Tom when the time comes. I also apologize for not taking appropriate action fifty years ago. I was all but certain that he had started killing, and allowed it to happen. While I admit that I was distracted with a larger problem, nonetheless I allowed it to happen. For that I apologize. I'm pleased to see that you are doing a better job than I did at embracing the Slytherins and helping them into appropriate careers."

He continued. "With respect to the suspected spies, I'm equally certain that one or both of them will betray you. Amelia has been notified. She will make the arrests. I wish you much success, Harry. Remember that it will be at least five minutes before any help can arrive."

"Thank you sir. Thank you for lunch. Thank you for everything."

Hugging his young friend, Dumbledore said, "You are very welcome, Harry. Good luck."

Healer Pomfrey was bottling potions when Harry came up for his lesson Friday evening. "Good evening Harry. Professor Dumbledore stopped by a moment ago." He asked to see you in your office in 15 minutes." She went up to him, and gave him a big hug. "Good luck tomorrow Harry." She went back to bottling the embalming potions that she prayed she would not have to use.

Dumbledore came to see Harry in his office, carrying a large mug of cocoa, a polished wooden box, and a cold butterbeer. "Can we visit for a while Harry."

"Of course. Please sit down."

"Harry, I wanted to talk with you a bit more about tomorrow. I believe that there is a better than even chance that Tom will be joining the dementors with his remaining Death Eaters, and come himself. I say this not to discourage you, but to offer you some advice. A war is not the same as a proper wizard's duel over a lover. Your goal is to stay alive, and destroy some of the enemies. In the Second World War, one of the American generals told his troops, "Your job is not to give your life for your country, rather to make the other guy give his life for his country." I may have improved his grammar somewhat, but that was the essence of his message."

"If Voldemort is there tomorrow, and you have the opportunity to stab him in the back, take it. Do not allow yourself to get into some sort of

wizard's duel with him. For one thing he always starts early. For another thing, he knows fifty years more spells than you."

"As I said Harry, people will almost certainly die tomorrow. Your primary responsibility is to make certain that the people who do are not you or Miss Granger. Anything you can do beyond that is extra credit. Do you understand what I am saying?"

Harry understood, perhaps too well. He hoped that Hermione understood as well.

Dumbledore unclasped the box that he had brought with him. It was a velvet lined pistol case. "This is the .45 that I used to kill Grindelwald. I would be honored to give it to you. With it is a signed permit for both of your pistols from Director Bones."

"Thank you, Sir. Thank you very much."

"Harry, please spend a restful evening in Miss Granger's arms. Good luck."

"I will see you tomorrow evening sir. Good night professor."

"Good night Harry."

An hour later Harry was laying out the things that he wanted for tomorrow. He carefully checked the .45 that Kingsley had given him, his wand, his sword, the holsters, his Firebolt, and his dragon hide boots. Since he had practiced with it, he decided to bring that pistol rather than the one that Albus had given him. He laid out one of the blue oxford dress shirts that Hermione had bought him, and his favorite pair of jeans. He carefully put away the weapon that Dumbledore had given him.

Hermione looked angry and upset. "What's this?"

Harry looked at the object that his love was holding. "It's a copy of my will."

She slapped Harry, surprisingly hard. "I don't want your money. I want you to spend everyday of your life with me. I want you inside me. I want your smile. I want to ride motorcycles with you. I want you to teach me how to fly properly. You have to be here to give me these things. Please don't leave me. Tears had welled up in her eyes."

Harry gently held her arms. In as even a voice as he could muster, her said, "I can't promise you that I won't get hurt anymore than you can promise me that you won't. I do promise you that I will be very careful. Can you do the same for me?"

She looked into his eyes. "Yes I promise. Should I have a Will too?"

"Probably. You can use mine as a model."

"I'm sorry Harry. I never wanted to have to think about these things."

"No one does." He sat her on the couch next to him. Harry handed her a parchment and a quill. As she was writing, Harry conjured a dozen yellow roses. He picked one up and gently brushed the side of her face with the petals.

"Stop that, I'll smear the page."

Harry waited patiently for a few minutes until she was done writing. As she finished, Harry spelled each of the roses to lightly brush the sides of her face, hair and arms. "Did you know that a yellow rose smells different than a red rose?" Harry conjured a brush, and started brushing her hair.

"Harry, that tickles."

Harry vanished the roses. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. I just wanted you to use them someplace else."

"Oh." Harry conjured a pair of red roses. He walked over to pick her up and carry her into bed.

There was a knock on the door. It was Ron. "Hi Harry. Hi Hermione. I was wondering if you wanted to watch the Hufflepuff – Slytherin Quidditch match with me tomorrow?"

"I'm sorry Ron, I made plans to teach a class tomorrow."

"I didn't see a signup sheet."

"It's not being held here."

With the tenacity of a bulldog, Ron asked, "Oh. How about you Hermione? Luna will be there."

"I'm doing something too."

"Oh. What's this?" he said, picking up her Will.

"Accio, parchment." Hermione said sharply, "It's personal. OK? Please don't touch anything."

Ron looked around the room for a moment, eyeing the different items that Harry had laid out. He obviously was being excluded from something big. "Sorry. You two look busy. I'll see you later."

"OK."

Ron left, closing the door behind him harder than necessary.

"Hermione, he didn't mean anything by it. He just has incredibly bad timing."

"I know. Let's get some rest."

Saturday - 26 October

Harry woke up at six. Dobby popped in a few minutes later, carrying a tray with fruit, bacon, hotcakes, syrup, toast and large mugs of coffee.

"Here is breakfast for Sir and Miss."

"Thank you Dobby. Thank you very much."

Harry got Hermione up. After breakfast, they sat and visited for a moment. "Harry, we've thought of everything that we can. This is a good plan, and with some luck, no one will be seriously injured. I promise you that I'll do everything that I can to not get hurt. I know that you'll do the same."

"Hermione, please promise me one thing. If Voldemort comes, get away. Portkey, apparate, whatever you need to do, just get away."

Hermione finished placing her wand in her wrist holster. "I promise. Harry, thank you for being my best friend. I'm not sure if I ever told you, so I'm telling you now. Thank you for always being there for me. I never had any real friends before you." There were tears in her eyes.

"I would say the same to you. Thank you for being my best friend, Hermione. You've always been there for me. We have a wedding to plan, Christmas gifts to unwrap, and little Potters to raise. Nothing is going to stop that. I love you Hermione." He kissed her tears away.

"I love you so much Harry. Let's get going."

At 10:45 a group of about twenty people walked into the Hogs Head Inn and asked where the meeting room was for the Firstborn Society. The adults were obviously muggles, with that look on their faces that most first years have while walking the Hogwarts halls. Everyone in the pub stared at them as they made their way down the hall, each group nervously watching the other as if they were looking at a circus sideshow.

Most of the attendees were mothers of students in the first four years. Hermione explained what she was trying to do with the society, and that currently they were trying to reduce the dangers of the wizarding world. The attendees were disappointed to hear that the meeting was over before it had even started.

Ten minutes later, another group of fifteen people walked in, again asking directions. They were pointed down the hall where they walked into the meeting room. Like the group before them, most of them immediately portkeyed back to Dumbledore's conference room at Hogwarts.

Remaining in the conference room were Aurors Tonks, Hestia, Bob Amos, Mary Campbell, John Thomas, along with Hermione, Fred and George. A minute later, Anna Smith returned to the conference room after a trip to the loo. Hermione was shocked that she had not counted correctly, and had missed one of the parents. "Do not leave this room, Mrs. Smith. We believe that the building will soon be under attack from dark creatures and evil wizards. You'll be safe here, but don't leave the room."

"I'm sorry Miss. I didn't realize. My daughter Ericka told me to come today. It was a way for nonmagical parents to get involved with the school. It sounded like a wonderful idea."

"It will be. The regular meetings will start in a month or so."

"The only magic that I have seen was when that older woman, Professor McGonagall came to my home four months ago, inviting Ericka to come here for schooling. Then a few weeks ago, a good looking young man who was one of the teachers came to Ericka's Hospital room, and made some flowers right out of thin air!"

"That would be Professor Potter," said Tonks. "He has a people saving thing. Do you really think he is good looking?" She winked at Hermione who had turned beet red.

At 11:15 Harry apparated into the back storeroom of the pub from the Auror conference after Remus had taken his place. Hermione's plan was to call Amelia at the first sight of trouble. An hour passed, and

nothing had happened. At 12:30 Hagrid walked in, ordered two pints and left as planned. An hour later Victor walked in, took a quick look around and walked out. A minute later, a teenaged muggle with long blond hair walked out of the conference room, and asked at the bar if there was a pay phone that she could use. Most of the patrons at the bar laughed at her. Aberforth had told her no, and turned away. The woman walked back into the conference room.

Tonks closed the door. "Aberforth gave me the first signal. Be ready."

Five minutes later, a Death Eater walked into the pub, and told everyone at the bar to leave or die. Within fifteen seconds, the bar had cleared, with Aberforth leading the way. He had knocked a tray of glasses over on the way out making a loud noise. That was the final signal. Harry waited another minute and apparated to the Three Broomsticks and called Remus.

At the other side of the village, Dementors and villagers were everywhere. Harry hadn't counted on there being so many villagers out and about. They were clearly frightened to death. Many were screaming. Harry got on his Firebolt, and started on the dementors. Casting with his sword, he created a dozen dazzlingly white stags that made short work of the hellish creatures. Each time a pair of the stags gored a dementor, it sizzled, leaving only a cloak on the ground and the same foul stench in the air. Within three minutes, there were over sixty cloaks lying on the ground. The smell was sickening.

Harry was chasing after the remaining dementors casting Patronus after Patronus when he saw the Aurors appear. They were battling a dozen Death Eaters, and moving people into buildings. Harry kept casting Patronus stags.

Remus had apparated to the village with the other Aurors still looking like Harry. He had managed to hit three of the Death Eaters with Reducto curses when he saw a jet of green light pass above his shoulder. The last thing that he saw as he whirled around were Voldemort's red eyes. The second jet of green light from his wand hit him square in the chest. Remus slumped into the street. Voldemort began laughing as he continued his killing spree. He saw a young woman dash out of the Hogs Head. She saw him and for a second

stared into his eyes unmoving in shock. A second later she began to run as fast as she could.

Flying at about thirty feet toward the north side of the village Harry saw his destiny. Voldemort was standing in the street, systematically murdering villagers with the killing curse. Most were simply standing frozen with fear and easy targets for his uncontrolled rage. As Voldemort was taking aim at Anna Smith who had run out of the Hogs Head pub, Harry silently stopped his broom above and behind Voldemort. Harry quietly unholstered the Colt Government model .45 that Kingsley had given him.

For a moment, the lifetime of injustice that Riddle had subjected Harry to clouded his concentration. For a moment rage and hatred threatened to take away his concentration. Harry pushed those thoughts aside and focused his attention on his task. The jet of green light hit the woman, and like the others, she fell to the ground, lifeless. From forty feet, Harry carefully took aim, focused on the front sight, and fired three quick rounds like Kingsley had shown him.

Unfortunately, Harry never saw if he hit Voldemort or not. The recoil from the pistol, while quite manageable when they were practicing standing in the gravel pit, was enough to make Harry lose his balance floating on his broom. As gracelessly as he had fallen down the stairs at Privet drive, Harry fell off his Firebolt hitting the ground hard, shoulder first, twenty-five feet below.

Harry awoke a few hours later. Sitting around his hospital bed, were Tonks, Ginny, Molly, and Hermione. In the beds next to his were several of the villagers, George Weasley, Aberforth Dumbledore, and Susan Bones.

"Hello," said Harry.

Hermione was first to kiss him, though it seemed like the other women each found an arm or an ear to kiss or hug. Harry winced in pain.

Molly spoke first. "Oh, Harry we were so worried about you. Are you all right?"

"I have a serious headache and I think a broken wrist, shoulder, and left forearm. Why were you so worried?"

She said, "Harry, we had heard that you had died."

A sinking feeling ran through Harry. "Remus?"

Tonks nodded, tears in her eyes. "Voldemort cast a killing curse at him from the back and started laughing maniacally, thinking that he had murdered you instead. He must have killed thirty others as well."

"I remember firing at him before I fell off of my broom."

She said, "You hit him three times and killed him Harry. Voldemort is dead. Dumbledore burned his body immediately after he fell. Harry, listen, there are about a thousand people out there waiting to congratulate you. Before you go, Remus had this in his pocket. It has Hermione's and your names on it. I think you should read it before you try to get up." She handed them the note.

Harry and Hermione,

If you are reading this, it means that I was killed today. Most likely I left the training session and went to help you at Hogsmeade. If something happened there, let it be known that it was my choice to go there and fight dark wizards with you. Remember when I told you how few people die with any dignity. If I was killed today helping you, I had my dignity.

You and Hermione are my sole beneficiaries. I know that you do not want to live in Grimmauld place. Therefore I ask that you either sell it, or give it away at your choosing. I never wanted to live there either.

Harry and Hermione, I want you both to know that this last year has far and away been the happiest of my life. I owe that all to you both. The two of you took me into your home, and treated me with kindness and respect that I have never known in my life.

Harry, I am sorry that I wasn't there for you when you were growing up. I had lost all of my self-respect, and was not a man that anyone would have wanted to know. I had made friends with Ogden's and every other self-destructive habit known to man. Five years ago, Dumbledore found me and helped me turn my life around. Later I had the honor to get to know you and some of your friends. You took Sirius and me at our word that night, demonstrating the man that you were becoming, and gave us a glimpse of the hero that you would come to be.

Harry, I had accepted death that day before you came and rescued me. I only hope that I was able to assist you in some small way today. I have two requests of you Harry and one of you Hermione. First, please bury my body next to your parents. It is a very nice spot, and I would be honored to be by James and Lilly, if you wouldn't mind. Second, please watch over Tonks and Dr. Turnbull for me. I cannot express what their kindness has meant to me.

Last, Hermione, please marry Harry, and start raising brilliant little bushy haired, green-eyed Potters just as soon as you are ready.

I love you both.

Your friend,

Remus Lupin

Hermione and Harry handed the letter to Tonks. She finished it and they gave each other a group hug. Tonks, said, "Harry, you meant the world to him. We lost a lot of good people today, but every one of them would tell you that it was worth it."

Poppy noticed Harry awake and scooted the women over to the other side of the hospital wing. "Hello again Harry. Now that you are awake, I can work on your arm, shoulder and wrist. Does anything else hurt?" She cast a healing spell on his forearm and another on his wrist. After a few minutes, she led him into the bathroom to shower. "Miss Granger, would you go get a nice set of robes for Harry to wear? He will be out in just a few minutes."

Hermione came back a few minutes later. She gently knocked on the bathroom door and handed Harry his clean clothing. He came out a minute later, looking better. Poppy cast another spell on his shoulder. "Please try not to move it for about ten minutes." Harry sat in a chair until Poppy told him that he could get up.

"As always, Healer Pomfrey, thank you."

She kissed him on the forehead. "Harry, you are and always will be my favorite patient. Now go. I have others to look after."

Harry opened the door leading out of the hospital wing. Director Bones was waiting outside. She hugged Harry, and handed him a small neatly wrapped package. "I meant to give this to you a few days ago. You can look at it later Harry. How are you?"

"Just OK," Harry tried to smile at her. It was a sad smile on his weary face.

As they walked to the front doors Amelia said, "Harry, there were over two thousand witches and wizards on the front lawn five minutes ago. I expect that the number is growing as we speak. I would ask that you and Hermione step outside with Dumbledore and me for a few minutes. Dumbledore will say a few words. You could wave and we can come back inside. I know you're hurting, and need some time to rest."

"Amelia, who died?"

26 villagers – I don't have the names with me

Mrs. Anna Smith

3 Aurors – Bob Amos, John Thomas, and Mary Campbell

Remus Lupin

On the dark side:

Voldemort

85 dementors

11 Death Eaters

Victor Krum

“What about the other one?”

“Kingsley, Moody, Stralthand and Daily picked him up after Hermione called. He is in the detention cell. No one has been notified yet.”

“Call it right. He was there.”

They met Dumbledore at the front door. He gently hugged Harry and Hermione, saying that he was very happy to see them both. They opened the great oak doors. The crowd saw them and cheered. Dumbledore magically magnified his voice.

“Good evening.” The crowd went absolutely silent.

“We have much news to share with you this evening. Many of you will rejoice at the news that you will hear. Please be aware that the victories that will be announced have come at a cost. Please give your complete attention to the Director of Magical Law Enforcement, Amelia Bones.”

There was cheering and a lot of applause. Amelia magically magnified her voice. “Good evening. The village of Hogsmede was attacked at 2PM this afternoon by a force of approximately eighty five dementors, twelve Death Eaters, and the man who called himself Lord Voldemort.” The crowd began murmuring.

“Thirty one innocent people were killed in the attack. Included in that total were a Hogwarts Professor, three Ministry Aurors, twenty-six villagers and the mother of one of the Hogwarts students.” There was absolute silence.

She continued. "On the dark side, twelve Death Eaters, eighty five of the dementors and the man who called himself Lord Voldemort, Tom Riddle were killed."

The applause was thunderous!!! Harry began to realize that Dumbledore had been right. Sometime the greater good was worth dying for. Remus had realized that.

Dumbledore finished. "We will have more news for you tomorrow. In the meanwhile the Hogwarts staff has provided several dozen tables with refreshments."

Harry went back in his room, closed the door and sat for a few minutes. He opened the little package that Amelia had given him.

Wednesday 23 October

Dear Harry,

Enclosed please find a Senior Auror license, and a Senior Auror badge. I am greatly honored and saddened to present you with these on a reserve basis. In the immediate term, they afford you the authority to do what it takes to stop Voldemort and his remaining supporters. I would be happy to discuss any long-term implications or opportunities at a later date.

Good luck,

Amelia

Harry looked at the certificate. It read:

Professor Harry James Potter is hereby granted the status of Senior Auror – Reserve. This gives you all the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of a full time Senior Auror except on an as-needed basis.

It was signed, by Director Bones, Wizengamot Head Dumbledore, and Minister Diggory.

He looked at the gold badge in its leather badge wallet for a moment and set it on the desk. The .45 that he used to kill Voldemort was on the other side of the desk. Harry took the magazine out of the pistol and unchambered the other round. There was a soft knock on the door. Ginny was there, broomstick in hand. "Hi Harry." She gave him a long warm hug. "Hermione sent me to collect you to take you flying for an hour. She told me to tell you to get your cute arse out of your room, now. Actually, I added the cute part, but let's go."

Harry's broom had been put away. Harry realized that Dobby had been at work. Harry put the pistol in his trunk and locked it before leaving.

He picked up his broom. They went out one of the side doors and flew over the lake and back to the Quidditch field unnoticed by the large crowd. Ginny released a snitch. She told Harry, "Close your eyes, count to five and we'll see who can catch it first." When Harry opened his eyes, the snitch was out of sight and Ginny was heading towards the other end of the field. Harry scanned the area near her for a moment, and headed for the other side. A minute later, he turned and saw Ginny flying toward him. Harry looked up and saw the snitch floating about twenty feet behind him. Harry turned around and followed. They chased the snitch for another five minutes, weaving up, down and sideways. Finally it weaved to the right side, in front of Ginny, and she grabbed it at the same time that Harry tried to grab it. "Ha, I got it."

"Good catch, Ginny."

"Thank you. Nice flying professor. It is time to go back, dinner is ready."

Hermione was not at dinner. It turned out that she had spent the time with Minerva. Hermione was extremely upset about the deaths of the villagers and especially Mrs. Smith. Minerva explained to her that each of the villagers has been warned that an attack was possible that day, and they had made choices to be there. "The Ministry and the Order had approved the plan. It is a tragedy that even one innocent person was murdered today, but it is a much greater good that the darkness has finally been lifted. You helped put a stop to it."

You have to look at the good that was done today, and accept that there was a terrible cost.”

She took her back to Harry’s room. He had been putting things away. “Professor Potter, Miss Granger needs looking after. Can I leave her in your care? Thank you both, and good night.” She closed the door as she left.

“Hi.”

“Hi.”

“How was your day?”

“The worst. Yours?”

“The same. Harry, I feel so bad.” She put her arms around him and began sobbing uncontrollably. Harry didn’t have any clever words to say. His tutors had prepared him for this eventuality for days. In hindsight, it would have been better to include Hermione in some of the discussions with Dumbledore and Bones. The reality was different. She hadn’t been prepared for the deaths. Tomorrow would be a better day. Harry picked her up, carried her to his bed, covered her up and held her in his arms for the night. Hermione didn’t sleep much, sobbing every few minutes. Harry rocked her on the bed, and held her tight.

Outside there were fireworks and celebrations from Kent to Inverness. News was rapidly spreading of Voldemort’s demise. The two people who felt worst that night were the ones that had made the celebration possible.

That Sunday morning in Crawley was shaping up to be one of the last warm sunny days of the year. The trees still had some of their autumn colors, but many of the leaves had already fallen. Dan and Emma had just returned from going on a walk around the neighborhood. As they returned to their home, they noticed an old couple sitting in their back garden. Getting a little closer, they saw

that it was Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall who had been waiting for them. Fearing the worst, they hurried up to the old wizards. Emma asked, "What's wrong? Have the kids been hurt?"

Professor Dumbledore reached out to shake their hands. "Please do not worry yourselves, Doctor and Doctor Granger. Hermione is fine, and I am certain that Harry has been mended by now."

"Come in, please. Can we get you some tea or coffee?"

Minerva said, "Thank you for your kindness."

Emma asked, "How can we help you?"

Dumbledore smiled. "It seems that Harry faced his destiny yesterday, and with Hermione's assistance prevailed. Harry succeeded in destroying Voldemort!"

Dan said, "That's brilliant!"

Dumbledore looked at him and nodded. "Yes, from most perspectives, it is. However, there were losses. One in particular is most troubling. Perhaps Minerva could best explain the situation."

Minerva carefully put down her teacup. "Voldemort's last victim was a younger single mother. Her eleven-year-old daughter is very similar to Hermione in many ways. She exhibits above average intelligence, a brave personality, a lot of spunk, and has a very kind heart. We were wondering if the two of you might possibly consider inviting her into your home."

Emma asked, "Was her mother a witch?"

"No. Both of her parents were typical non-magical people. Her mother was a nurse at a surgery in Kent. Her father died in an auto accident when she was quite young. As far as our records show, she has no other living relatives. You don't need to give an answer now. We also came to invite you to have lunch with Harry and Hermione. They'll be having lunch today at eleven at the Black Dog pub. You would of course have the opportunity to meet the girl in question, if you have

any interest. Hermione and Harry know nothing about this offer. If you don't have an interest, or believe that having another child in your home would be a problem, please do not feel pressured in any way. Please let us know if you have any interest after lunch."

Dan asked, "In general terms what happened?"

Minerva replied, "The village by the school was attacked by a force of a dozen Death Eaters, Voldemort, and about eighty five of the dementors. The Ministry Aurors were called. They killed or captured the Death Eaters. Harry had cast charms to destroy the remaining dementors. In the mean time Voldemort appeared, and was systematically murdering every resident of the village. His last victim was Mrs. Anna Smith. Harry saw him, and somehow killed him. Harry suffered several broken bones in the process. Neither Albus nor I were there. I don't know the specifics. Your daughter and Harry are being proclaimed Heros of the wizarding world. They doubtless saved hundreds of lives yesterday." They got up to leave. There was a tear in Minerva's eye. She was so proud of her young friends.

"Thank you for coming to see us Professors."

Minerva, said, "I shall stop by at one. If you're interested, you may want to come to school and visit this afternoon or tomorrow."

At 10:30, Minerva found Harry and Hermione sitting alone by the lake. Hermione had been sobbing for at least the last hour. "Good morning Miss Granger, and Professor Potter. May I join you two?"

Harry conjured a third chair, identical to the two that they were sitting on. Minerva hugged Hermione, then Harry. "I have something to say, that I have never told anyone. Harry, the day after your parents were killed and we thought that Voldemort was gone, most of the wizarding world was rejoicing. There were fireworks from Kent to Inverness, and thousands of owls were being sent here and there. I even remember it being mentioned on the muggle news. I remember spending the day sitting across the street from your Aunt's house sobbing. Your mother Lilly was a very good friend of mine. While everyone else was rejoicing over what we had gained, I was mourning the loss of my friend. It is not wrong to mourn the losses,

and remember that there have been hundreds and hundreds of losses due to Voldemort over the years. Yet at the same time, please remember that there would have been thousands and thousands of losses if you two hadn't put a stop to him."

"Hermione, and Harry, I couldn't be prouder of the two of you under any circumstances." She hugged Hermione again. Hermione was silent, but the tears had stopped. "I invited your parents to meet the two of you at the Black Dog today at eleven. Albus and I thought that the two of you could use some time away from school. We won't expect you back until tomorrow at dinner. No one else knows that you'll be there, so you won't be hounded. Albus is back at Crawley begging Dr. Turnbull to come for another week."

Hermione, said, "Thank you Professor. We really wanted to see Mum and Dad. Do they know what happened?"

"Yes, though only in the most general of terms. Before you to get ready to leave, I need to say something." Minerva put her hands on the young woman's shoulders and said, "Hermione, you didn't murder any of the villagers. You didn't cast a killing curse on Mrs. Smith or any of the Aurors. Harry if you hadn't stopped those horrors, they would have killed almost every villager there, and Voldemort would have murdered the rest. Last night, it would have been another village destroyed, and today yet another. There is not a living soul that within fifty miles of here that believes differently. Attend their memorials next week, and be grateful with the rest of us that the entire village wasn't sacked and burned, for that was certainly his plan. Your parents are very anxious to see you both. Please enjoy your day together. Bless you both."

The three of them walked back to the castle together. Minerva held one of Hermione's hands, while Harry held the other. Harry said, "Thank you Professor. We will see you later."

They dressed in jeans and jumpers, picked up some cash and left for the Black Dog. They said hello to Tim and took a booth in the corner. A few minutes later Dan and Emma walked in. Emma hugged Harry, while Dan hugged Hermione. No one wanted to be the first to let go. After several minutes, they collectively let go and sat down. Rather

than discuss the details, they just had a beer in silence. Dan ordered another round then Harry invited them up. Harry paid Tim, unlocked the door and relocked it after they had entered.

Dan and Emma had discussed what they would or wouldn't say or ask the kids after McGonagall had left. They agreed to let Emma do most of their talking. She started. "We understand that Voldemort has been destroyed along with some of those creatures. We understand that some good people were murdered in the process. We understand that you two helped put a stop to it. We love you both, and we're extremely thankful that you weren't seriously hurt. If you want to talk about what happened, we'd be happy to listen. If you just want to sit, we understand."

Her Mum's words of acceptance were like the finest potion to Hermione's broken heart. Hermione began speaking softly. "I invited some women to attend a meeting, knowing that by attending their lives would be in danger. One woman insisted on staying for the day. I watched her get murdered. I set up a meeting at a location, knowing that it would likely draw those creatures. Three Aurors were killed, along with twenty-seven of the villagers. Remus was murdered too. We had asked him to get involved. Mum, the entire British wizarding world is celebrating. All I can think about is losing Remus and getting Ericka's mother killed. As she spoke, it was as if poison was beginning to leave the system."

They sat in silence for a minute. As planned, Dan asked Harry if he had anything to eat, breaking the awkward silence. Harry conjured two pizzas, found utensils and plates, and floated a dozen butterbeers over to the table in front of the futons. Dan and Emma each took a piece. A moment later Harry cut a slice for Hermione, and took another for himself.

After a few minutes Dan said he read about the days following the end of the Second World War. "The cities were in ruins, and there had been a lot of loss and suffering, but suddenly there was reason to have hope again. Is that where your world is right now?"

Harry replied, "I think so. Most of the remaining Death Eaters had been killed, captured or arrested yesterday. According to the

numbers that we knew of, all or most of the remaining dementors were destroyed. I took Tom Riddle's life yesterday. There is every reason to believe that the wizarding world can enjoy a generation of peace."

Dan nodded. "We're very sorry to hear of the death of your friend Remus. We both liked him very much. Did he have family?"

"Just us. Harry handed Dan the letter that Remus had written them."

After showing it to Emma, Dan handed it back to Harry saying, "You two obviously meant the world to him."

Harry replied, "He lived quite a lonely life. I don't think he had a lot of close friends."

"He had you two. Before that he had your parents and your Godfather. Maybe that was enough."

Harry nodded. "Thanks. You're right."

Dan spoke. "Professor Dumbledore and McGonagall came to see us today. They asked us if we would be willing to take the orphaned witch into our home."

Hermione came out of her introspective haze. "That would be Ericka Smith. Harry knows her best. What's she like?"

Harry smiled. "She's a great kid. She reminds me a bit of an eleven-year-old Hermione in all the nicest ways. Are you really thinking of taking her in? She would be very lucky to be a part of your family."

Emma said at him, meeting his eyes. "Our family, Harry. It's all of our family. Professor McGonagall invited us to go and meet her this afternoon. We need to meet her in a few minutes. Thank you both for coming to see us this afternoon. We love you both."

Hermione and Harry said in unison, "Thanks Mum, thanks Dad."

The Grangers both smiled to themselves as they left to go back to their home and wait for McGonagall.

After lunch, Minerva returned to the Grangers' home. Dan and Emma told her that they would be willing and happy to take Ericka into their home. Minerva portkeyed them to Hogwarts so they could meet her. Ericka was sitting on the mats in Harry's classroom, reading a book. Yesterday had been a horrible day for her, losing her mother, and not knowing what would happen to her or to herself. She obviously had spent the morning crying.

Emma walked over and sat down by the young witch. Harry had been right. There did seem to be a lot of similarities to a younger Hermione. "Hello. My name is Emma." Emma waited patiently. Ericka didn't say anything for a while. Instead she reread her transfiguration book for a minute.

Finally she said, "Hi. I'm Ericka. Why are you here?"

"My daughter and her friend Harry said that you're a young witch worth knowing."

Ericka looked up, suddenly a lot more interested. "Are you Hermione's Mum?"

Emma smiled warmly at the young girl. "Yes. I'm Emma Granger. I'm happy to meet you."

"Hello. I'm Ericka Smith," she said offering her hand.

Emma took her hand in her own and held it. "Ericka, I'm very sorry to hear about your Mum."

"She should have been in Professor Potter's class. He told me it was OK to run away from the bad people. He saved me two times. I wish he had saved my Mum. The bad man killed her. I wish she had run away."

Emma nodded and smiled. "Professor Potter saved me once too. I'm sure that your Mum tried to run away. Professor Potter made certain that the bad man will never hurt you."

"I know. I just wish that he had saved my Mum, like he saved me."

"I'm certain that he would have if he'd seen her in time."

"I know. The bad man killed Professor Lupin too."

"Professor Potter told us that. We were friends of Professor Lupin's too. Ericka, Hermione and my husband would like you to come and stay with us over the holidays, if that would be all right with you. We have plenty of room and you'd be doing us a favor if you could."

"OK. Where do you live?"

"We live in West Sussex, not too far from Professor Potter. Professor Potter and Hermione will ride with you on the train and we will meet you by platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, if that would be OK with you?"

"OK."

"Ericka, I left my husband Dan down the hall. Can I go get him? I know that he would like to meet you too."

"OK."

"Emma returned a minute later. Ericka, this is Dan. Ericka will be staying with us over the holidays."

A look of recognition flashed across Ericka's face. "I've seen you here before. Are you a wizard?"

"No. Emma and I are children's dentists."

"Oh. My Mum was a nurse. Did you know her?"

"I don't think so. I wish that we had."

Professor Dumbledore knocked gently and walked in. "Good afternoon, Miss Smith. I see that you have met Miss Granger's parents. Professor McGonagall sent me to find you. Could you possibly help her for a while? She is in her classroom."

"Yes Professor. It was nice meeting you Mr. and Mrs. Granger. Thank you for asking me to stay with you. I'd like that very much. I won't be a bother. I promise."

Emma smiled at the girl. "You could never be a bother, Ericka. We hope to see you again very soon."

Ericka walked out the door and went to the Transfiguration room. Emma looked at Dan, who nodded.

"Please join me in my office." They walked the short way to the Gargoyle, and rode the stairs to Dumbledore's office. He said, "Please excuse me for a moment. I'll be right back."

He returned a minute later and sat down. Emma said, "How can we help?"

"Miss Smith is a very kind, very talented young witch, much like your daughter. In the immediate term, she needs assurance, placement, and her mother's affairs sorted through. She needs a legal guardian, and a wizarding guardian. Since school is in session for another six weeks, the placement issue is not as urgent. Would the two of you consider becoming her legal guardians?"

Dan said, "Yes. If she'd have us, yes we would. We'd be delighted to offer her a good home and be loving parents."

"Are you certain? I know this was not the topic of your conversation, this morning when you two were out for your walk together."

"It wasn't. We were talking about weddings."

"Ah yes, you have a most happy event to look forward to, but back to topic. I plan on asking Harry if he would consider acting as Ericka's wizarding guardian."

For a moment Dan looked surprised. "Can he do that? He is still sixteen."

"You future son-in-law just won a wizarding war. He quite literally can do anything that he wants to. Every door in the wizarding world is open to him."

Emma said, "We didn't mean it that way."

Dumbledore smiled indulgently. "Of course not. Harry was declared an adult wizard several months ago, and has been granted all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of any adult in our world. I believe that he would act in Miss Smith's best interest with her business affairs. As Miss Smith is a Firstborn witch, she currently has very little outstanding business in the wizarding world."

"We understand. Does Hermione have a wizarding guardian?"

"I was her wizarding guardian until she turned seventeen. I have been wizarding guardian to thousands of young witches and wizards. I was Harry's wizarding guardian."

"If you would excuse me for a moment, I will collect Miss Smith, and we can get her decision."

Emma looked at her husband and said, "Her mother isn't even buried yet. What a nightmare for that little girl. Are we ready to be parents to another preteen witch?"

Dan grinned at the woman he loved. "I wouldn't miss it for the world. This time, we'll at least have a clue about the things that she'll tell us."

Dumbledore came back a moment later with Minerva and Ericka. "Miss Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Granger were asking if you might allow them to become your guardians. They have a wonderful home, and have promised to take very good care of you when you are not at school. They know that they could never replace your mother, but they will give you a very loving home if you let them. Would that be OK?"

“Yes. Thank you. She took a hesitating step toward Emma, who reached out to hug her. Ericka ran over to her and put her arms around Emma. They stayed that way for a few minutes.”

“Miss Smith, perhaps you might wish to show the Grangers the Quidditch field for a little while. Doctor and Doctor Granger, I will find you before dinner and we can discuss any details, or other questions that we might have.”

Harry stayed with Hermione at Harry’s Place. She sat on the Futon beside him and listened to CDs with him. The loss of Remus and Anna was slowly ripping their hearts apart. At 7:00 PM there was a gentle knock on the door. Harry wandlessly opened the door. Tonks came in the door. “I didn’t want to stay by myself tonight. Can I stay here with you two tonight?” Harry brought a large comforter out of the closet and they covered themselves up, sitting watching the fireplace and holding each other.

Minerva looked at the Monday edition of the Daily Prophet. Amid reports of speeches, and eyewitness accounts from the weekend were several articles that she read.

Sirius Black fund makes donations to families killed in Hogsmede battle

Gringotts spokesgoblin Wheelcart announced today that the Sirius Black Victims Relief fund had issued donations of 10,000 Galleons to each of the Hogsmede families. An additional 50,000 Galleons was donated to repair buildings damaged in the 26 October battle. Wheelcart said that the Relief fund had also made donations of 20,000 Galleons each to the families of slain Aurors Bob Amos, John Thomas, and Mary Campbell. The donations totaled 380,000 Galleons. This reporter stands amazed at the generosity demonstrated by the trust.

Voldemort’s Wand snapped.

As part of a ceremony honoring the victims of the second dark war, the wand that Voldemort used in his 53 year reign of terror was snapped. Ollivander examined the wand and confirmed that it was the wand that he had sold Hogwarts student Thomas Marvolo Riddle 56 years ago. Minister Amos Diggory whose son Cedric was a victim of that wand was quoted as saying, "On behalf of the families of all of the victims of this wand, I am happy to help destroy it." The daughter of its final victim and Minister Diggory each threw pieces of the snapped wand on the fire burning Voldemort's other things and the dementors' cloaks.

She put the paper down. The information in it was important, but not urgent. Today would be a day that most of the dead would be buried.

The marble stones read:

Professor R J Lupin

Hogwarts Professor

Faithful friend

1960 – 1996

Sirius Black

Faithful friend

Godfather

1960 - 1996

It was not a large group that met at the gravesite of Remus Lupin, but one that he would have enjoyed having dinner or drinks with. Alastor, Tonks, Flitwick, Albus, Minerva, Sprout, Poppy, the Grangers, Dr. Turnbull, Arthur and Molly, most of the Order, and of course Hermione and Harry. They were seated in wooden chairs facing the two new graves.

Harry stood and spoke. "I received a letter from Remus the day that he was killed. If you don't mind, I like to share part of it with you. I think it speaks volumes to the man.

Harry and Hermione,

If you are reading this, it means that I was killed today. Harry continued reading the letter describing the words and actions of a true friend.

Harry continued. "Hermione and I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with Remus this last summer. We each made jokes that we were watching over each other. It was never clear who was watching whom. He often spoke of being grateful to Professor Dumbledore. First for giving Remus the opportunity to attend school, but mostly for helping a broken man regain his self-respect. Remus was a man that we are proud to call our good friend." Harry sat down.

Tonks got up. "We're also here today to remember another good man, Sirius Black. Sirius was my older cousin. Like many of you, I didn't get to know him well as a person until the last years of his life. Sirius was as focused a man as I have ever met. The cause that he focused on was of course protecting his Godson, Harry. He broke out of Azkaban when he learned of a threat against Harry. During the Triwizard tournament, he lived outside of Hogsmeade so that he could keep an eye on Harry. Like Remus, Sirius was not dealt the greatest hand in life. Yet those who knew him would say that never once complained about his situation." She sat down, tears in her blue eyes.

Finally Dumbledore spoke. "Yes we are saying goodbye to two of our friends today. They were two men who did their best to make the world a safer place. Each of us is a better person for having known them. Miss Tonks and Mr. Potter made excellent points. These were not men who complained about the hand that life had dealt them or were afraid to take risks. These were men dedicated to helping right the world's wrongs, men that I too am proud to call friend. Thank you for coming". He took two roses from a large pile and laid one in front of each marker. The others walked up and did the same.

Harry had arranged a private lunch at the Black Dog. They each toasted Sirius and Remus. Later, Harry thanked each person there for coming. As people were beginning to leave, Molly came up to Harry and asked if she and Arthur could talk with him.

Molly and Arthur were led upstairs to Harry's home. Hermione and Dumbledore both noticed the three of them walking up, but individually elected not to interfere.

Harry sat across from them on the futons. "Harry," Molly said sounding uncharacteristically formal, "we have come to you to plea for our son's life. We both know that we have no right or claim to do so, but as parents we are trying anyway."

Harry asked, "What is it that you believe he did?"

Arthur answered, "We are fairly certain that he was blinded by ambition in his dealings with Fudge. He was trying to collect information regarding the Azkaban prisoners. I think it is a possibility that he was asked to pass along information regarding your whereabouts last Saturday."

"What would you like me to do?"

Molly said, "Harry, He didn't hurt anyone." There were tears running down her face. She realized that pleading for her son's life to a man that he had wronged for years was a losing cause.

"Mrs. Weasley, I didn't say that he did. Another spy among us was found out that day, and he's dead." Molly covered her mouth with her hands.

Arthur persisted. "Harry, we recognize Percy for his faults. We simply don't want to lose him."

Harry replied, "There has been enough loss. I may have some influence, but I have no authority in this. What are you hoping to have happen?"

Arthur replied, "What do you suggest Harry?"

Harry thought for a moment before saying, "His career at the ministry is certainly finished. It's possible that Director Bones could be talked into dismissing him for inadvertently releasing information. If that happened, he'd do best to leave Britain and spend the next five years doing volunteer work someplace. Severus Snape was sentenced to ten years in a muggle prison with a work release program. He currently is doing potions research that may help Frank and Alice Longbottom someday. Perhaps a position could be found for him at one of the wizarding universities in China. There's a man that I could speak with on that. I'm not certain what if anything Percy has been charged with. If he has already been charged as an accessory in thirty-one murders, there is nothing that I, or anyone could do for him."

Molly looked at Harry, praying that he would offer her additional hope. The little boy who she'd helped onto the train so many years ago, now held her son's life in his hand.

Harry was quiet for a moment. "I'll do two things. There are two people who had direct knowledge of what Percy may have been doing on Saturday. We just buried one of them. I will talk with the other. If they didn't personally witness Percy passing information to a known Death Eater, I'll talk with Director Bones this afternoon. If she hasn't formally charged Percy, I'll ask her to delay action until I could talk with the person from China about finding him a position there. Percy would have to accept the offer sight unseen. There would be no renegotiation. Is that fair?"

Arthur spoke. "Thank you Harry. We could never begin to re..."

Harry cut him off. "Please stop sir. There is nothing to be said. Sending your son to prison for the rest of his life will not give Remus' life back to him. It won't give a mother back to Ericka Smith. It's your judgment that Percy will never commit another crime during his life. I hope that you're right. I'll come to see you later tomorrow evening."

“Thank you Harry.” The three of them walked down the stairs and back into the pub. Alastor, Hermione and Dumbledore were still there. Harry looked at Dumbledore for a minute and nodded.

Hermione and Alastor went upstairs while Dumbledore stayed in the pub and finished his cocoa. Alastor hadn't directly seen Percy with a Death Eater. Percy had made two calls when he was there using Remus' cell phone. Moody left, telling Harry to be careful, and that he would see him the next day.

Hermione asked Harry what he was up to.

“Percy is being held at the cells in the ministry. It is possible that he will be charged soon for passing information along.”

She looked Harry in the eye and asked, “Did he?”

“I don't know for certain. You saw the note that he sent to Ron last year. He was blinded by his job at the ministry, and was so impressed by being around the Ministry authority figures – first Mr. Crouch, then Minister Fudge. I am all but certain that he was caught up in Fudge's dirty politics and I believe that Fudge or someone else asked him to transfer to law enforcement to get information about the captured Death Eaters.”

“What's going to happen to him?”

Harry thought for a moment. “Without any intervention, I expect that he would be sent to prison for a very long time. What do you think should happen?”

“Maybe he has some useful information that he could give about other Death Eaters. I didn't mean it that way. I meant information about different Death Eaters, contacts, or finance – that sort of thing. I don't think that Percy is inherently a bad person. Perhaps the people that he was talking with are all dead, and he can just start over?”

“Hermione, let's be clear between ourselves what we're trying to do here. Are we trying to find a reason to protect Percy, or protect our relationship with the rest of the Weasleys?”

“Hermione thought for a moment and asked, “Harry would you do anything to help me if I really needed it?”

“Of course. You know I would.”

She kissed him on the forehead. “Yes I do silly. That’s all Molly and Mr. Weasley are trying to do. I think you’re asking what can we do to help them that we can live with?”

Harry nodded. “I’ll talk with Director Bones about the possibility of getting him dismissed from his position and sent to China to help English speaking witches and wizards with their studies.”

“That’s a good idea. They locked up Harry’s flat and explained their idea to Professor Dumbledore. He had no improvements to it, and they parted.”

Harry went to see Amelia on Monday afternoon. She invited him in.
“Good afternoon Director Bones. I was hoping that I could speak with you for a few minutes?”

“Of course Harry. What happened to Amelia?”

“Based on what I’m about to ask, I wouldn’t feel right.”

She sat down in the chair next to him, and offered him a cup of tea.
“Wizard debts are interesting things Harry. Some times the best thing to do is to never call in the marker. Anyway, that’s another lesson for another day. Please tell me who put you up to asking me something that has you sitting so uncomfortably in your chair?”

“Molly Weasley.”

“Ah. So is this a request to intervene in the Percy Weasley investigation on behalf of his parents?”

“In so many words, yes ma’am. Can I ask you a few questions?”

Bones smiled at Harry, “Of course. Go ahead.”

“Is there any direct evidence of blatant wrongdoing on his part?”

“That is open to interpretation. If the evidence was presented with the necessary slant, more than half of the five panel Wizengamot groups would convict him.”

“Could he provide any useful information regarding who he’s been talking with, or about Death Eater finances?”

“Possibly.”

“Would it be wrong if he were dismissed from the Ministry and sent to China for the next five years?”

Amelia considered his idea for a moment and said, “I’d be OK with that. I don’t believe that he’s likely to commit additional crimes. Could

you explain it to the families of the people who were killed if word got out and was printed badly in the Daily Prophet?”

Harry met her eye and replied, “I explained it to Hermione an hour ago, so I believe that I could. I believe that she is a good moral barometer.”

She nodded and thought for a moment. “Harry, let us suppose that a young man was thinking out loud to a friend regarding some things that he supposedly wished would happen to a certain convict’s wife. Let’s further suppose that someone else manifested those thoughts into actions. I wouldn’t be surprised if some of his associates suggested that the young man stay out of it, so if the story ever came unraveled, he would stay squeaky clean. In kind, let’s say that this conversation never took place, and I had simply called you in to ask you if you’d taken the time after saving the world to open the package that I sent you?”

“I did. I’m honored to accept your offer.”

“Good. I can’t begin to express the gratitude for the service that you have done for the wizarding world. I’ll send you the appropriate materials for you to read. We can talk more about it later. I know that you have made a home for yourself at Hogwarts. As such, I won’t call on you except in extreme need.”

“On a different subject, if you happen to think of it, please ask Albus to invite Dr. Chang to come see me this evening. On a final subject before you invite me out for a drink, there will be a lot of people in the coming months asking you to lend your name to their specific cause. I can only suggest that you be highly selective of the causes that you agree to consider.” Harry looked at Amelia and nodded. She asked “So where are you taking me?”

“How about the Snooty Fox in Crawley? Muggle pubs are a much better choice for me.”

“I understand your reasoning. Let’s go.”

Harry returned to Hogwarts an hour later. He told Dumbledore what Bones had told him in her office about Dr. Chang. Albus agreed that Harry should completely disconnect himself from the deal after seeing Molly the next evening.

The graveside ceremony for Anna Smith had few attendees. The minister had not known Anna well, and did not know the actual circumstances regarding her death. Several of her fellow nurses were in attendance. Dan and Emma, Professors Flitwick and McGonagall, several of Ericka's housemates along with Harry and Hermione had come. The muggle newspapers indicated that she'd died from a brain aneurysm that had come on quite suddenly while she was visiting her daughter's school. Poppy had submitted the medical papers regarding her death like she had needed to many times in the past. Hermione held her new sister's hand during the entire service.

The Grangers and Hermione drove back to their home in silence. They knew that most of the British and European wizarding world was celebrating at this very moment. Yet from their perspective there seemed to be little to celebrate. They thought of the Firstborn Society that Hermione had mentioned wanting to start. If ever someone had needed a support group it would have been a single parent of a witch.

The Hogwarts students had gone back to the school via port key with Professor Flitwick.

Harry left after the service to meet with Dumbledore and Chang. They confirmed that Percy would be dismissed with cause from the Ministry effective 31 October. He would spend the last week at work documenting every conversation that he'd ever had with, or concerning a list of people including Fudge, Malfoy, Edgecombe, Umbridge, Krum, the Grangers, Harry, Hermione, Sirius, Remus, Pettigrew, Diggory, Snape, Bones, and Voldemort. He would be obliviated of those memories. Dumbledore asked Harry not to speak of Percy's arrangement to anyone except Hermione unless he had heard the outcome from Amelia first. Harry rehearsed the conversation that he would have with Molly and Arthur that evening. Chang left to make the arrangements at the wizarding University of

Kowloon. Percy would start there on 1 November. He couldn't return to Britain for at least five years.

Harry spent most of the afternoon talking with Tonks and Diane, who had been called back for another week. She asked more questions about the details knowing that far more noncombatants had been killed than Harry or Hermione would have ever anticipated. Harry had come to realize that people died in battle and as often as not it was the noncombatants who were killed first. A large part of Harry's consolation was in the knowledge that the battle ended relatively quickly and Voldemort's reign of terror appeared to be over.

Tonks was highly relieved that Voldemort was gone. She said, "Harry, you gave us a load of fresh air to breathe. Don't get me wrong lil Bro; I'll miss Remus until my dying day. But life will have a chance to improve for a lot of people. Look at us. We're Aurors, not soldiers. Bones went forty years or more in her job and she never had to draw down and kill a man. I've spent the last four months fighting and recovering from one injury after the next. The merchants in Diagon Alley were all scared witless after the attack at the joke shop. Think about it for a moment. For everyday people to be so scared of somebody that they would go around saying he-who-must-not-be-named is a really crappy way to live. You changed all of that for the better."

Harry surprised them with his insight. "My concern isn't about the last dark lord, rather the next. Tom Riddle was probably in school when Grindelwald was in power. Everyone was probably focused on fighting him instead of watching the troubled kids. Dozens of these dark wizards started out in Durmstrang, or Beaubatons or Hogwarts over the years. I don't think we ever get any first years that walk into the castle thinking 'I want to kill, rape and destroy everything in sight.' Tom's home life was probably no better or worse than mine. I'm sure that Draco's Mum loved him as much as Lavender's. Somewhere along the line people failed them by not providing leadership. We can do a better job in school to teach ethics as much as spell work. If a student commits a crime, we need to be willing to suspend or expel them. If someone does do something bad, we need to determine if they are interested in being reformed or not. If they're not, we need to minimize the possibility that they'll commit additional crimes.

Diane hugged him. "Are you sure you aren't thirty-six Harry? That was the most responsible thing I've heard said by anyone regarding this whole evil wizard dialogue. You're fine. I need to go talk with Ericka Smith for a while." She found her in the library with Hermione who had started to bond with her. Ericka was doing well in class. Having the smartest witch in the school as her personal study buddy wasn't hurting.

Harry waved her over. "Hi Ericka."

"Hi Professor Potter."

"This is my friend Diane Turnbull. She helps me sort things out, and I was hoping that you could talk with her for a while. I don't think there's anyone in my classroom right now. Maybe you could show it to her?"

"OK."

"Thank you." Ericka and Diane walked to Harry's classroom. It was empty. They closed the door and sat down next to each other on one of the mats with their back to the wall.

"I'm sorry to hear about your mother, Ericka."

"I'm really going to miss her. She was so excited when I got my letter to come here."

"I can imagine. Can you tell me what happened?"

"She went to Hogsmeade to go to a meeting last Saturday and Mr. Voldemort killed her. Professor Potter killed Mr. Voldemort. Professor Dumbledore burned him up. Another man whose son was killed by him helped me snap Mr. Voldemort's wand."

"I see. It wasn't your mum's fault that Mr. Voldemort killed her. She wasn't doing anything wrong."

Ericka held Diane's hand. "I know. I just wish that she had run away like Professor Potter taught me to do."

"Is he a good teacher?"

"The best. Do you know Hermione?"

Diane smiled at this charming little witch. "Yes I do."

"She's Professor Potter's girlfriend. She's my new sister."

"Hermione is very lucky to have you for a sister. What things did you and your mum do together?"

"We went to football games. Do you like Quidditch?"

"I've only seen one game, but I did like it. Do you like to fly?"

"We're just learning. I don't have my own broom. Do you?"

"No. I go flying sometime with Professor Potter. I'm not a witch. Professor Dumbledore and Professor Potter invited me here this week as their guest. I've been talking with different witches and wizards who've had a loss this year. I'd be very happy to talk with you again tomorrow if you'd like."

"I'd like that. Thank you. It was nice to meet you."

"It was very nice to meet you too Ericka. Are you going back to the library, or would you rather just sit here for a while?"

"I'll just stay here a while. Thank you again."

It was strange for Harry to enter the Weasley's home and not have a gaggle of teenagers running about. Harry remembered an eleven year old Ginny putting her elbow in the butter dish, and Percy sitting on Errol the family owl. At nine Molly greeted Harry. "Come in Professor."

“Harry Mrs. Weasley. Just Harry.”

After a moment of small talk, it was time for business. Arthur asked, “Do you have any news of Percy?”

“Yes. I went to see Director Bones after we last met. I offered her my perspective, and a few suggestions. At that time she had not made any decisions regarding how to disposition his investigation. Based on not having read about an arrest since then, I believe that it’s likely that she considered them, and decided to use one of them. I don’t know for sure. It’s possible that she has been spending a few days interviewing him. I expect that you’ll know for certain on Friday.”

They looked like they’d just received the best news in the world! “Harry, thank you for supporting our family time and time again.”

“It was the right thing to do, Mrs. Weasley. I could never repay you enough for your kindness. Besides I wasn’t able to do much for your son. I only offered a suggestion.” Harry got up to leave. “Thank you for the desert. It was excellent. I need to get back to the castle now. Goodnight.”

“Good night Harry. Thank you again.” Arthur shook Harry’s hand. Harry nodded, then he vanished.

The next morning Hedwig flew in with the other owls and found her. She untied the letter and read it.

Dear Hermione,

I know that you are hurting so badly over what happened. I hope this helps. Last July I was in the deepest depression that I ever could have imagined. I was certain that my own death was the only honorable thing left for me. In my mind I had killed Sirius. The fact that I hadn’t performed the spell myself didn’t matter. It was my fault.

Then like an angel, you came and rescued me! You made me see that people make their own decisions, and that sometimes bad things happen to good people. I didn't kill Sirius. You didn't kill Anna. They both made choices to be in dangerous places. Other people made the choice to murder them.

Hermione, please don't leave me alone. I need your strength to help me get up in the morning. Please let me be your strength too. I want to be there for you. If you are hurting, please let me hurt with you. We have agreed to share our lives together, both the good days and the bad. As such, I will hurt over their deaths until you tell me not to.

All my love,

Harry

Hermione got up and walked to his classroom. Harry was practicing with his sword.

She slammed the door shut. "Harry James Potter, don't you dare go hurting over something that you didn't cause." She threw a tennis ball at him. Harry let it hit him. She threw another and another, pelting him. "You didn't have anything to do with their deaths. If anything you helped save the village and a lot more people from getting hurt. You didn't kill Remus, and you certainly didn't kill Anna." She had about run out of steam. Harry wandlessly levitated her into his arms.

"Either did you."

She held her lover as tightly as humanly possible. "I love you Harry Potter."

"I love you too Hermione Jane."

After a minute, Harry had yet to put his best friend back down. She said, "OK. Now that that's settled, I have to get to class and you have to get to work, so you can continue to support us."

Setting her on her feet, Harry replied, "Yes, Ma'am."

They stuck their tongues out at each other, smiled, and both began laughing.

"I could write you a pass."

"No. I'll be fine."

Enjoy your day, Miss Granger.

You too, Professor Potter.

The class wouldn't have been more attentive if Merlin had been teaching it himself! Harry reviewed the action that happened with the Aurors on Saturday in appropriate detail. When his students pressed about Voldemort, Harry developed the response, "He's dead. For now, let's please leave it at that." Soon the class was busy practicing the aiming and dodging skills that Harry said were important.

Wednesday evening came. Harry had requested a week off from his own evening

classes. Dumbledore had called a meeting of the Order for 8:00 that evening. Dumbledore had asked Harry to meet with him prior to the meeting.

Harry knocked on Dumbledore's office door. "Come in Harry. How was your day?"

"Everyone was pretty worked up. It took a while to get everyone back to task."

"I wouldn't worry too much about it. If you wanted to take your class outside and simply let them roll down the hill in relief, it wouldn't be wrong." The two wizards looked at each other, eyes twinkling, and both started laughing at the idea.

Dumbledore continued. "As much as the idea of having your students roll down the hill is deserved, I would like to talk with you about the Order of the Phoenix. As you probably know the Order is ancient. The charter of the Order is threefold:"

To be vigilant against the threat of Dark Wizards.

To provide a check and balance against a corrupt Ministry.

To prepare the next generation of witches and wizards to do the same.

"I will be nominating you as the new head of the Order of the Phoenix this evening. I reconvened the Order nearly eighteen months ago. That was the evening of the Triwizard Tournament. At that time it was apparent that Voldemort had indeed returned, and that Fudge would do nothing to stop him. During that time, I did what I could to introduce some qualified younger wizards and witches into the Order. I made a mistake with Mr. Krum. At the time I wanted to include wizards and witches from outside Britain and get some younger blood into the group. He seemingly was a good fit. I am happy to say that I did much better recruiting Ms. Jones, Miss Tonks, Miss Granger, the Weasley twins, and yourself. I would encourage you to continue to search for potential candidates so that you have a large enough group at your disposal when you need it. By the end of the school year, I would encourage you to either inactivate the group, or have identified some new potential threat."

Harry thought about what Dumbledore had said and had not said. After a moment Dumbledore continued. "Harry, what are your thoughts regarding Percy?"

Harry was quick to respond. "I view him as a potential threat. To my knowledge, he is the only known Voldemort loyalist to not be in prison or dead. Given our relationship with the rest of the Weasleys, allowing him the benefit of even a serious doubt seemed to be the only reasonable move. As such, I anticipate asking Dr. Chang's associates to keep a close eye on him. With respect to other real or potential threats, there are the Malfoys and Dolohov who have the

potential to recruit followers should they escape, and quite possibly Fudge himself. Snape is also worth watching. Who am I missing?"

"I'll have to give your last question some thought. I believe that your thoughts regarding Percy are correct. He is a highly intelligent young man, who almost certainly believes that he's been wronged."

"What are you going to tell the group about Krum and Percy?"

"Simply that all of the facts are not yet in. Krum is dead, so those facts should be easy to gather. Should Molly or Arthur bring it up, I would let them have their say. Would you be willing to share your memory of the afternoon?"

Harry considered the request for a moment. It would rip his heart to see Anna get murdered again. "Yes. Not because I am proud of having taken his life, rather to provide a proof that he is indeed dead."

"Let us go to your classroom then. I will ask Dobby to bring refreshments. Also regarding Dobby, I know that he would like to talk with you regarding working for you. Please have the conversation with both him and Winky in the next few weeks."

By 7:45 everyone had been seated. There were several obvious items of business. After everyone had arrived, Dumbledore sealed the door and began. "Good evening and thank you for coming on short notice. I would like to take the opportunity to clarify the events of the week-end with you and to look ahead."

Hestia showed her memory. She was waiting in the conference room with the others and heard the signal. She went out with Bob Amos, John Thomas, and Mary Campbell. They unknowingly found themselves in between two groups of Death Eaters with no cover. Thomas and Campbell were killed within twenty seconds. The popping sound a minute later of the first twenty Aurors arriving masked the sound of Bob Amos getting hit. He had killed two death Eaters before losing his own life. The Death Eaters found themselves in the same situation that the Aurors had a moment ago as another twenty Aurors apparated to the battle. Within two minutes the Death Eaters were all dead. She saw Harry weave forth and back on his

broom casting Patronus after Patronus destroying the dementors. As Harry had gone to the south side of the Village, Voldemort appeared at the north end and was systematically killing people and burning buildings. Hestia screamed as Voldemort killed the person that she thought was Harry. A few seconds later, Anna Smith ran out of the Hogs Head out and for two or three seconds found herself face to face with the monster who would kill her. As her body was hitting the ground, Hestia heard three shots, looked up and to her left to see Harry fall off of his broom. She looked back and saw Voldemort dead on the ground. The entire battle hadn't taken more than five or six minutes.

Moody showed his memory, apparating to the village then firing Reducto after Reducto hitting seven of the Death Eaters who had been killed.

Kingsley showed his memory, getting people inside, killing a Death Eater, watching Harry/Remus kill three Death Eaters with Reducto charms. Moody explained that Remus had taken Harry's place at the Auror training center, and had come to help when the Aurors had been called.

Harry showed his memory beginning with the apparation to the Three Broomsticks. Harry's memory ended as he fell the 25 feet onto the ground.

Finally Hermione showed her memory, watching from inside the pub as the others left and fell. She had pleaded with Anna not to move. Suddenly Anna ran out of the pub and fell a few seconds later. She heard the shots, ran outside to see Harry lying dead on the street. Behind him a shop was burning out of control. She was running down the street and saw another Harry lying on the other side of the street with his broom hovering two feet in the air. Mediwitches and Aurors had circled him. Dumbledore appeared moments later and ignited Voldemort's body. The memory ended.

Dumbledore brought up the lights that had been dimmed as the images had been shown. At least half of the group had tears in their eyes from watching their friends get murdered. Molly was weeping loudly. Dumbledore looked at the group for a moment and said, "Our

friends fought bravely that day. None of us will ever forget their actions.” For a minute there was silence.

Finally Tonks asked, “What happened to Victor?”

Fred said, “I killed him. The sodding traitor. He had hit George with something and was casting the killing curse on me. I blew his neck off with a Reducto charm before he could finish the curse. Harry, you were right. It is a faster spell than the killing curse.”

Moody looked at Dumbledore. Dumbledore said, “Percy Weasley was taken in for questioning Saturday regarding a possible leak of information. All of the facts are not in regarding him, so I have no speculation regarding the outcome.” Molly and Arthur appeared relieved regarding the way that Dumbledore had framed the announcement of their son’s arrest. Fred and George looked at their father questioningly, but didn’t say anything.

Dumbledore called for Dobby and Winky. They brought in two trays of refreshments for the group. He let the group talk amongst themselves for a few minutes.

Dumbledore finally spoke. “We have met the major current objective of the order and with Harry’s help found ourselves equal to the challenge. Soon it will be time for me to step down as head of the group.” There was absolute silence among the group. This was the last thing in the world that they had expected to hear.

He continued. “As such it is my responsibility to nominate the next person to head the group. As none of you except Alastor were members when I was nominated, I will review the rules of succession with you. Should the current head of the Order be alive and able, it is his or her responsibility to nominate a successor. A simple majority shall be enough to proclaim a new head. Should the current head be killed, or unable to nominate a successor, the three longest tenured witches or wizards shall jointly make a nomination. Should the nominated person not be voted head, tradition calls that the candidate leave the group. As such, it is my privilege and pleasure to nominate Harry James Potter to be the next head of the Order. I believe that he possesses the insight, skill, courage, and leadership

to guide the group to its next victory.” There was silence for a few seconds. Moody stood and started clapping. Arthur, Molly, Tonks, Hestia, and Shackbolt were up a second later. Within five seconds it was evident that he had the support of the entire group.

The vote of support was unanimous. Harry stood up. “I thank you all for your confidence and call on you for your continued support. I believe our most urgent challenge is to identify potential threats that may see opportunity in the power vacuum that Voldemort’s death has created. As such, I ask that you take the next few weeks to consider the potential threats, the risks that they may represent, and the likelihood of their turning dark, or making a move. I would like to meet again the first Sunday evening in January.”

After the meeting everyone came up to either Dumbledore and/or Harry to congratulate them. A half hour later Harry and Hermione were alone in Harry’s room.

Hermione asked, “You didn’t seem surprised by that. Had it been rehearsed?”

“Yes. We met for an hour prior to the meeting to discuss succession, and the ongoing role for the Order.”

“How can I help you?”

“In the short term launching the Firstborn society is the best plan. There are other threats out there that may emerge. The Aurors can handle most of them. In the long term we need to change peoples’ attitudes regarding bloodlines.”

The Saturday newspaper article on page five wasn’t large. Kingsley read it carefully.

Ministry Admin Assistant Sacked

Story by Rita Skeeter

Ministry Administrative Assistant Percy Weasley was dismissed with cause yesterday. Director Bones was quoted as saying, "I was sorry to have to let Mr. Weasley go. He had not handled confidential information as well as he needed to. I wish him success in his future endeavors."

Rita had presented the information in the best possible light for Percy. As requested, Percy had spent the last week writing up a highly detailed account of the conversations that he had had with the group of people that he had been asked about. When he was finished, and interrogated under veritaserum by Shacklebolt and Bones on Friday, Percy's memories relating to each of those people had been obliterated. Auror Shacklebolt accompanied him to his flat, and got him packed up. Shacklebolt read the terms and conditions of his sentencing to him one more time to make certain that he understood them. His parents were allowed an hour to visit, then Kingsley activated the port key which sent Percy to the wizarding university in Kowloon. Percy and his parents understood that he had been given the lightest possible sentence, effectively racking up another life debt. Kingsley was satisfied that justice had been served.

Dumbledore came to Harry's room on Sunday Morning and gently knocked on the door. "Good evening Miss Granger, Harry. May I come in?"

Hermione said, "Of course sir. Please have a seat."

Harry asked, "Can I get you a cocoa?"

"Please. Thank you both."

"As you may know, there are currently two positions open on the Wizengamot. With your permission, I would like to nominate both of you to fill those positions. Under normal circumstances, the job does not require more than a half-day and an evening a month. Except for unusual or significant issues, the full Wizengamot does not hear a trial. Typically it is a five-judge panel. You both have exhibited

wisdom, character and exceptional judgment. The Wizengamot would be a better group with you two as members.

Harry thought of Amelia's conversation regarding lending his name to a cause. This seemed to be a good one. He looked at Hermione. She nodded, and said, "We would be happy to be nominated Professor. Is there anything that we need to do or prepare?"

Dumbledore's silver mustache quivered, and his eyes twinkled. "No, Miss Granger. There is no studying required for this interview. If accepted, you would be given the appropriate volumes containing the law relating to the areas that you would normally hear cases for. You would of course be assigned to different groups. I won't take any more of your time. Please enjoy the rest of your evening."

"Thank you Professor."

A few minutes after Dumbledore had left, there was another knock on the door. It was Ron and Ginny and Luna.

"Come in. Hi."

Ron was looking extremely embarrassed. "Ouch. OK I will." Harry conjured them chairs. Dobby came with a tray of iced butterbeers and left.

They sat down. Ron started, "Harry, and Hermione, I have something that I need to tell you. I stopped over last week, uninvited and I realize now what you two were facing. I had no idea about the pressure that you two were under. I'm sorry I got mad."

Harry didn't need to have his buddy fall on his sword. He glanced at Hermione for a moment. She nodded and said, "Ron don't worry about it. Harry and I were under a lot of stress that night. You didn't do anything wrong."

Ginny asked, "Did my rat-face brother really pass information on to the Death Eaters?"

Harry looked at her for a moment, framing his answer. "Maybe. If he did, let's hope that he learned a lesson. Actually from what I heard, he may come to like his new position. Kowloon is supposed to be an interesting place. It's on Mainland China right across from Hong Kong Island. There are a lot of English speaking witches and wizards to tutor.

Ginny hugged Harry. "Thanks for giving him another chance, Harry. Mum and Dad wrote us about what happened. That was really generous of you."

"I didn't do much. I only made a suggestion. The decision was made by Director Bones."

"Yes," said Ron, "but she'll do anything that you ask. Ouch."

"That's not true Ron. Thank you Luna. It was her decision, and she's ultimately responsible that it was a good one. Let's let it go. How about some pizza?"

"Great. Do you have any more butterbeers? Ouch. Cut that out Ginny."

They laughed, and enjoyed each other's company for the rest of the evening.

Diane knocked on Harry's door on Wednesday evening. Harry answered, "Hi Diane. Come in."

"Thank you. Actually I'm here to visit you professionally."

"Please have a seat, Doctor." Harry conjured her an overstuffed chair like he had bought, and one for himself.

"Thank you. How are you holding up?"

"Just OK. Hermione is carrying a lot of guilt, and I'm nervous about visiting Hogsmeade."

“Do you think the villagers are blaming you for their loss or are delighted that Voldemort is dead, and their losses were minimal?”

“Both.”

“Harry, the dead might blame you, but I doubt that the survivors do. Does that make sense?”

“I think so. I haven’t seen any of them.”

“What do you mean?”

“The ghosts.”

“Is this another “dragons are real” revelation?”

“Yup. Some witches and wizards choose to become ghosts when they die. Anyways, I haven’t seen any of the dead villagers yet.”

Diane took a moment to compose herself at his words. “Harry, can I ask you a very personal question?”

“Sure.”

“Do you see yourself ever having to kill anyone else?”

“No, but circumstances may change over time.”

She thought about what Harry had said for a minute. “Harry, that wasn’t the answer that I was hoping to hear.”

“Are you asking me as a Doctor, a friend of the Grangers, or as an arm of the Ministry of Magic?”

“A friend of yours. I’m your Doctor. These conversations have never gone anywhere else.”

“I apologize if it sounded that way. I was made a Senior Auror reserve officer this week. It means that the Ministry might call on me at some

time in the future. I can think of only one reason that would cause them to call me.”

“Can you resign at some point if you want?”

“I forgot to ask.”

“I only want what is best for you Harry.”

“I know. Thank you very much.”

“Will you take Ericka Smith and Hermione to Hogsmeade this weekend?”

“Ok.”

“Trust me. They won’t blame you. On a different subject, can we go flying tomorrow?”

“How about at 11:30. You should borrow Hermione’s Motorcycle jacket and gloves. They’re quite warm.”

“Thank you Harry. Goodnight now.”

“Goodnight Diane.”

Ericka had never been to the Headmaster’s office before. Even though Hermione and Harry had accompanied her, she was still nervous. Hermione, told her not to worry, and that she would get to meet Dumbledore’s pet phoenix. As they came to the stone gargoyles, Hermione was a bit surprised. Instead of saying the password, it stepped aside for them. They stood on the circular stone stairs and they gently began to move until they reached the landing. Ericka knocked on the griffin doorknocker, and the door opened. “Please come in, Miss Smith, and Miss Granger. Can I get you both a cocoa? Both women accepted. Ericka looked around the office for a moment. Fawkes leapt off of his perch and flew to Harry’s shoulder near Ericka. She gave the swan sized bird, a pet. The beautiful red and gold

feathered bird trilled a note and flew back to its perch. "He seems to have taken a liking to you Miss Smith. Fawkes is an excellent judge of character." The little witch beamed at him.

Dumbledore continued, "As you may know each witch and wizard who is not born of magical parents is given a wizarding guardian. Your wizarding guardian is responsible for your well-being, and education as it relates to the magical world. They also watch out for your financial concerns and are the trustee for your Gringotts account should you have one. Professor Potter has agreed to assume these responsibilities on your behalf. As such, he handled the business of taking care of your mother's estate. He also opened an account for you at the Gringotts wizarding bank. Perhaps he can explain for you."

"Ericka, the wizarding bank is in Diagon Alley. Hermione and I will take you there over the Christmas holiday. We packed up the things that were in your home in Kent. They are safely stored in this magical trunk. I will put it in your bank vault, along with the other things for you. This is my friend from Gringotts, Griphook. Griphook takes care of the trust and estate accounts." Ericka's eyes grew wide at the sight of Griphook.

"Good morning, Miss Smith. As Mr. Potter said, he handled the closure of your mother's estate quite well. This is the key to your vault." He handed her the intricately shaped gold vault key. "You may keep it, or you can ask your wizarding guardian, Mr. Potter to keep it for you. He or I will provide you a complete detail of the contents of your vault as you wish." As requested, Griphook did not mention that Harry had deposited the five hundred thousand Galleons that Tonks had insisted that he keep in Ericka's account. As such, she was unknowingly quite a wealthy young witch.

"I would like Professor Potter to keep it for me, please. She handed Harry the key. Harry, nodded, and carefully put the key in his pocket. Hermione gently squeezed Ericka's hand to reassure her.

Dumbledore concluded the meeting. "Very good Miss Smith. I have asked Professor Potter and Miss Granger if they wouldn't mind escorting you to Hogsmeade today. Your last visit was cut a bit short."

"Thank you Professor Dumbledore. Mr. Griphook, it was nice to meet you." Hermione and Ericka left to get ready to go for the day. Harry shrunk the trunk, and accompanied Griphook back to Gringotts to deposit her trunk, and sign the rest of the paperwork. He returned a few minutes later.

Hermione and Ericka were waiting at the fireplace in Harry's office. Pop, there was Harry on the floor. As usual, Hermione, helped him up, and dusted him off. Ericka giggled. "It's not funny," said Harry, though he knew it was a losing battle. They walked out the oak front door of the castle. On the way to Hogsmeade they waved at Hagrid, who saw the three of them, and waved back, smiling. Harry took them into Honeydukes first. The little witch looked around and whispered something to Hermione. She took twenty Galleons out of her bag and handed them to Ericka. She bought enough sweets to share with her dorm mates. They visited the post office then went to the robe shop and said hello. Harry introduced her to the clerks and to Madam Mulken. She quickly measured Ericka as Harry had requested. They went to the quill shop. Hermione bought her a new quill with spellchecker. They stopped in the Quidditch shop. Ericka was looking at Quidditch Through the Ages. Harry told her that she could have his copy if she would like. They stopped at the village cemetery. Harry conjured flowers for each of the new headstones. Finally they made their way into the Three Broomsticks.

Harry had been dreading the encounter. The noisy pub was about half full. A second after they closed the door, the pub became stone silent. Everyone in the pub had stopped what they were doing and turned to stare at them. A moment later, Madam Rosmerta and the two other barmaids began applauding. Soon, everyone stood to greet them. Harry shook everyone's hand as he introduced Hermione and Ericka. They ordered their lunch.

"Did you really play on the house team when you were my age?" asked Ericka. "One of the older girls said that you had never lost a match."

Harry turned red. Hermione came to his rescue (more or less), saying, "Harry is a really great flyer. He was invited to join the team in his first

year. He did win every match that he finished. If you look in the trophy room, you will see his name on the trophy cup. If you look a bit farther back, you will see his Dad's name on the cup too. James Potter played Chaser when he was in school."

"Did your Mum play too?"

"No, I don't think so. I think she was more interested in Charms and Arithmancy, like Hermione."

"Did Mr. Voldemort kill them too?"

"Yes he did. Harry can show you their picture when they get back. His Mum was really pretty. She looked a bit like Ginny Weasley. Harry looks a lot like his dad, except he has his mum's green eyes."

Ericka said, "You look a lot like your mum too Hermione, except you're a little taller."

Harry said, "You look a lot like your mum Ericka. You have a pretty smile, and bright eyes just like she did."

Ericka nodded, tears welling in her eyes. Hermione gave her a hug, both of them realizing that they had always wanted a sister. Madam Rosmerta came over to visit for a moment. She said that the repairs had been made to the various buildings, and things were getting back to normal in the village. Harry ordered three cases of butterbeer, paid their bill, and they left. Dobby popped in took their packages for them and popped back to the castle.

The following Tuesday, Dumbledore asked Harry to visit him in his office. After getting Harry a coffee Dumbledore continued his discussion. "As I mentioned, I would like you to prepare to assume the Headmaster position next fall."

"Sir, I'm not ready to be headmaster of the school yet."

Dumbledore cut him off. "Harry, what you lack in experience, you more than make up in character. It is the castle that chooses the headmaster, not the board of governors. You may recall that Delores Umbridge was unable to enter the headmaster's office during my absence. Surely you have seen that the gargoyle is admitting you without a password. That is not my doing. The castle has chosen you. In preparation, I would like you to take your NEWT exams in Defense, Charms, Transfiguration, and Potions in January. I will rearrange your schedule, eliminating the Thursday and Friday morning sessions with the Aurors. We will spend three mornings a week together. The exact days may vary depending on our respective schedules. I assure you Harry; you will be adequately prepared for the job. You will receive instruction from the other professors on the essence of the subjects for which you have not yet been exposed."

"Thank you Professor."

"There will be a formal announcement in June. Until that time, I ask that you tell no one other than Miss Granger."

"Yes, sir."

"Enjoy your evening, Harry."

"You too sir."

Tonks, Hestia, Kingsley, Amelia, Griselda Marchbanks, and Moody had asked Harry to come to class early. Kingsley and the others had conjured desks and were facing Harry. Kingsley spoke.

"Harry after carefully reviewing your field record, and in complete cooperation with the school board we have decided that you have been awarded your NEWT level certification in Defense against the Dark Arts. Also we have decided that you have indeed graduated from our Auror level training class. As such we thought it appropriate to have a bit of cake to celebrate."

"Thank you."

Dobby and Winky appeared carrying a cake and a tray of butterbeers, tea and coffee.

They visited for a few minutes. After Marchbanks had left, Harry asked, "What ever was done with the Azkaban prisoners?"

Amelia answered. "They're still in the holding cells. The Wizengamot will begin meeting beginning in January to decide their fate. The suggestions on the table include re-sentencing the prisoners, in some cases to execution, or to a muggle prison depending on their circumstances, reopening Azkaban with different jailors, or using a new technique developed by the Unspeakables to destroy their magical ability, effectively making them squibs."

They visited for a while, and began to leave. Harry thanked everyone for their help again. Tonks remained behind. "Professor Potter, I wanted to talk with you for a bit if you have the time." Harry was momentarily confused. This wasn't "big sis Tonks", or "trolling Tonks", or even "pal Tonks" asking to have a conversation.

"What's up?"

"It's this teaching thing, Professor. You asked me to fill in for Remus a few weeks ago. The thing is, I really like it. Moody said that he was going to retire at the end of the school year, and I was wondering how I would apply to do this on a permanent basis?"

"As I was told what seems like a long, long time ago "for the right person, teaching is remarkably rewarding, not in money, rather in job satisfaction." Speaking for myself, I love it, and I understand why you would too. Let's talk again in a few months, OK?"

"Thank you."

"Enjoy your day, Auror Tonks."

"Professor."

On Friday morning, Harry went up to visit Dumbledore. Harry started the conversation saying, "I understand something now sir."

"What is that Harry?"

"Why you shot Grindelwald eight times. If I had to do it again, I would have shot Riddle a hundred times, then started hacking him up."

Dumbledore nodded, thinking back to all of his friends that he had lost over the years to a man who had such obvious potential when he had walked through the school in his first year.

"Is that why you burned him up?"

"Partially. Beyond the anger, I was reading about a technique called cloning, which sounded too much like a real possibility in his case. I have to admit, I did get a certain satisfaction watching his body turn to ashes. Not to worry, I vanished them an hour later. I also vanished the remains of his parents from the cemetery in Little Hangleton." Dobby appeared with a cocoa and a butterbeer."

Dumbledore sipped his cocoa. "Yes Harry. I felt an indescribable rage that day with Grindelwald. You have suffered more than most at Tom's hand. You at least had the satisfaction associated with ending his reign of terror in our world. It is my hope that you have felt these burdens lift from your shoulders the last few days, allowing you to stand as tall and proud as you deserve."

He continued. "It is time for you to stop looking back, and change your focus to the future. You have a family to raise, a promising career, friends, and loved ones. Those things make you a wealthy man, Harry. I hope your Christmas holidays will be the best that you have ever had. I will see you in January. I also want to thank you for the Red Corvette. I hope to have many hours of enjoyment with it."

"You will look fabulous driving it sir."

"I hope to. My last car was one of the very early models. I must say that this one looks considerably more enjoyable to drive. On a different subject, should you find yourself in Diagon Alley over the

holidays, here is a short list of books that you should purchase and read.”

Finally the day came to leave for the holiday. Harry, Hermione and Ericka boarded the train together. Hermione and Ericka had grown used to calling each other Sis. They took turns taking each other around to meet their friends from different houses. It seemed that a lot more of the students were now interested in knowing the first year Ravenclaw than had been in previous months. Harry spent most of the ride back talking with Neville. His Gran had written him two weeks ago regarding the treatments that his parents were receiving. She said that they were starting to make some progress. Neville was very hopeful, but realized that ‘some’ was a very subjective word. Ginny came by and found him. They left shortly after.

Hermione and Ericka came in and sat down next to him. Ericka asked, “Why are you so happy Hermione?”

“I’ve been waiting for Christmas for a long time this year.”

Ericka asked, “Does Professor Potter give good presents?”

She smiled and said, “The best.”

Ron came by a few minutes later looking ecstatic.

Harry asked, “What’s up Ron?”

“I got an owl this morning from Lee Sutherland, Manager of the Chudley Canons. They are holding tryouts for a reserve keeper in four weeks. He sent me a special invitation.”

Hermione said, “That’s fabulous. Where do they play?”

Ericka surprised everyone by saying, “Their stadium is in Gloucestershire County.” She turned slightly red. “I love to follow Quidditch.”

Hermione hugged her, and asked Ron, "Who's their Keeper now?"

"Shelton McKnight. He graduated the year before we started. He's OK."

Harry said, "Ron that's fabulous. I hope that you make the team."

"Thanks. I do too."

"We'll come visit you Monday morning."

OK. I'll see you later." Ron went back to talk with Luna.

Hermione collected Ericka and got off the train. Harry had their trunks in his pocket, and had apparated off the train a minute earlier and had stood away from the train until the reporters noticed him. The crush of reporters that was now swarming around him was intense. This was his first public appearance outside of school since Voldemort's death. Harry was really trying to distance himself from Hermione and Ericka to give them a chance to meet the Grangers. Tonks had volunteered to accompany them to the car park.

Harry was polite and gave answers to most of the reporters' questions. He ignored the questions that had to do with how Voldemort or the dementors had been killed, and why Voldemort had selected that day to attack Hogsmede. No one asked questions regarding Percy or Ericka. After ten minutes, Harry thanked them for their interest, wished them happy holidays and apparated away.

Rita had not been in the crowd. Harry had previously called her and offered to meet her in the Black Dog. He invited Rita up to his home and proceeded to answer her questions for an hour. He knew that she couldn't reveal the location of his home. After a while Harry asked her questions about the Wizengamot and various departments of the ministry. Harry said that he needed to get going and thanked Rita for all of her help. He wished her a happy Christmas as they departed from the pub.

While Harry enjoyed trading favors with Rita, he was careful not to abuse the privilege. His interview with her would easily be worth a

month's salary for her, yet he never asked for anything in return. She knew of his relationship with the Grangers and his friendship with the Weasleys. Harry had simply come to like the woman as a friend and tried to help her out when he could. In reality Harry was doing more or less the same for most of his friends – using his wealth or his fame to give them a hand starting or furthering their careers.

The Grangers had been busy converting one of the spare bedrooms previously used as an extra study into a really nice bedroom for Ericka. It had posters of castles from around the world, one of which was Hogwarts. The closet had been filled with jumpers, tops, jeans and skirts that were her size.

Hermione had given her parents the talk, so there were no surprises. Harry had his own room in their home, so her parents could choose to believe what they wished.

The days preceding Christmas were a blur for Harry. He and Hermione along with little Ericka went shopping and bought packages for everyone that they knew. Harry had really enjoyed Christmas shopping this year. Obviously money was no object with anything that he had purchased. The real difference this year had been time. Harry had made evening trips the last week of school to London, Paris, and Diagon Alley selecting the special gifts. Now that the holiday had come, Harry probably was the one who was the most excited. This was the first Christmas together with his new family. He would never forget it.

On Christmas Eve day they stopped over to the Weasleys. Arthur, Molly, Ginny, Fred and George, Luna and Ron were there. It was really nice to visit with them. Their home had been decorated colorfully for the holidays, and they had purchased new furniture for their family room. Molly said, "We read about you in the paper today, dear. Congratulations."

"What did it say?" Ginny asked taking the paper that Molly had handed her.

Hermione Granger Admitted to the Wizengamot

Story by Rita Skeeter

Wizengamot Head Albus Dumbledore announced that Hermione Granger has been elected to the Wizengamot. He was quoted as saying, "Miss Granger's profound intelligence and sense of fair play will make her an outstanding new addition to the Wizengamot. She will initially serve on the crimes against muggles team. Miss Granger has long been active in defending rights of groups that have frequently been taken advantage of." This reporter believes that she will be an excellent addition to the wizarding court. In a related story, Hogwarts Professor Harry Potter recently was selected to fill the fiftieth position of the Wizengamot. Professor Potter will serve on the organized crime team.

Arthur said, "Congratulations Hermione. It is an exceptional honor. I also have to say that you are the first muggle born witch in my memory to serve on the Wizengamot. Congratulations. It is all but unheard of for a student to be nominated, let alone selected."

"Thank you Mr. Weasley. We were quite surprised when Professor Dumbledore mentioned it a month ago."

After a hot butterbeer, and a half hour of visiting, Molly pointed Harry and Hermione to the large wrapped package that was by their Christmas tree. The card read, To our favorite young couple, love the Weasleys. The package read to Hermione and Harry. "Go ahead, open it dears." Harry asked Hermione to open the package. It was a beautiful, light oak grandfather clock sized family clock. The package had a dozen hands that could be charmed to include anyone that they wanted to add. The face had eight positions that they could label for any activity or condition that they wanted to. Below the clock was a lighted display case with glass shelves. It really was a beautiful piece of furniture for their home.

"Thank you so much. Your love over the years has meant the world to us." Molly hugged Harry, while Arthur hugged Hermione.

Harry said, "I almost forgot. We brought some things for you too." Hermione handed out the packages, while Harry excused himself for a moment and stepped outside. When he came back, Ginny was opening a set of books on starting a fashion design business. Unknown to her, there was also a new Firebolt waiting for her on her bed in her dormitory.

"Thank you both. You know how much this means to me."

They had given Ron a pair of dark red Dragonhide boots. "Chinese fireball, I believe. They should look pretty good on you mate."

"Thanks Harry" said Ron, not quite having grasped that the gift was from both of them. "They look fantastic."

"Ouch." Ginny and Luna had both poked him, and then began smiling.

"Actually, Hermione, picked them out, but you are welcome."

For Luna they had found a wonderful pair of hiking boots, knowing that she would make good use of them. "Thank you both, I had worn my last pair out last summer. These are perfect."

They had given Fred and George the paid two year lease on the building that Harry had rented in Hogsmede for the Bloodworks story that they had ran in the Daily Prophet. Fred said, "Thanks Harry and Hermione. We were wondering who Terry Tahpor really was."

Hermione laughed. "Just rearrange the letters a bit. It really is a nice space. We hope that it will work for you."

"We know. It's perfect," said George. "We had been looking at it all fall, then found out that that Tahpor bloke had leased it to start a shop. They laughed."

Hermione said, "Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, there is something for you both outside." They all stepped outside. Wrapped in a large red ribbon, was a new navy blue Land Rover. Arthur was beside himself as Harry handed him the keys. Hermione called Molly over and whispered in her ear for a moment. The two women looked at each

other, smiled, and began laughing wildly at their private joke. After a minute, they had tears in their eyes from laughter.

Too soon, it was time to leave. Harry hugged Molly, Luna, and Ginny, while Ron, Gred, Forge, and Arthur hugged Hermione. "Thank you again. It was great to see you," they all said at once.

They apparated back to the Black Dog and walked up the stairs. After deciding where to put their new clock, Harry asked Hermione what she and Molly had been laughing about. "I told her that Flitwick had placed an anti-tinkering charm on the Land Rover. Only a qualified Land Rover mechanic can get the bonnet open."

Harry made up his mind. He thought about Dobby and Winky.

Pop, pop.

Dobby looked up at Harry and said, "You called for us Sir and Miss." They were both wearing their new gray robes.

"Yes. We were wondering if you two would like to come and stay with me when school lets out for the holiday."

Dobby's tennis ball size eyes almost popped out from excitement. "Oh yes, Harry Potter sir. Oh yes."

"Winky, would you like to stay with me too?"

"Yes, Winky is a good house elf."

"I know. You both are. My home isn't very large."

"We won't take up much room Harry Potter, sir."

"I didn't mean that. There is plenty of room for both of you. I don't have much to do. Tim might need a bit of help at night after the bar closes, and Hermione's mum might like a bit of help too. There will be

things to arrange for the wedding. I will pay you each two galleons a week and you will get two days off each week. OK?"

Dobby looked nervously at Hermione. He had talked Dumbledore down to paying him one Galleon a week. Hermione smiled at both of them.

"Thank you Harry Potter sir, thank you. Two Galleons a week would be fine."

Thank you both. Will you both spend Thursday with us? We would like to have you over for dinner if you would like?

"Thank you Sir and Miss. You is a great Wizard and Witch."

On Christmas, they all went to the early morning service and were spending the afternoon relaxing and enjoying each other's company. Emma's dinner was fantastic. Harry and Hermione had taken care of the cleanup, in about ten seconds. Finally it was time to open their gifts.

Harry had found two gifts for Ericka. The first was a perfect condition Silver Arrow broom. It had a blend of comfort, stability and handling not found in any current production broom. Harry had been tempted to buy her a Firebolt, but realized that it would have made a very poor choice for a beginner. If she ever became interested in playing Quidditch, he would find her a suitable racing broom. He also bought her a beautiful leather bound photo album. Harry had filled it with photos that he had found – some of her mother, some of her school friends and some of her new family taken the day before. He remembered how much the photo album that Hagrid had made for him had meant. She obviously loved it.

He delighted Dan with tour tickets to the Hunter Valley vineyards in New South Wales. Harry also offered Dan the choice of the ten hour or two minute flights.

For Emma, Harry found a boomerang and a certificate for a lesson at Duncan's Boomerang school of Sydney. He also gave them a lifetime pass for the master suite at the Sydney Harbor Hotel. Griphook had indicated that it was one of the properties where the Potter Trust held a significant interest.

He found a book that he was certain that Hermione was going to like - The Witches' Wedding Planner – by Gilderoy Lockhart. He also handed her a box that Dobby had collected containing nearly six hundred signed applications from witches to join the Firstborn Society.

Harry marveled at how much the two women were alike. They were brilliant, highly compassionate, cool under fire, and had a lovely dry sense of humor. He realized what a lucky man he was to have them love him.

Ericka had given each of them an All About Me book that she had written. Professor Flitwick had helped her make copies.

Hermione bought her parents a family clock. Once they realized what it was, they were absolutely delighted. She gave Harry a beautiful walnut glass case to put his Order of Merlin medal, and a little red bow. For Ericka, she found matching big sis, lil sis pendent necklaces. She gave Ericka a set of ice blue dress robes, very similar to the set that Harry had asked Madam Malkin to make for her.

Dan and Emma bought Harry a pistol cleaning kit, a lock box for the weapons, and found him an exceptional book on education, Instructor Excellence. They had inscribed the inside cover, "May these words help you throughout your career at Hogwarts. Love, Mum and Dad."

Harry also had received a package from Diane. Opening it up, he found a little superman

action figure. There was a note inside. It read, "Harry. It is time to retire your cape, at least until the next evil dark wizard pops up. I have learned a few things in my work, namely that the hours that you spend preventing kids from going wrong pays off handsomely in years to come. I was delighted to hear you say that you had come to the same conclusion. Harry, a lot of women love you - Emma,

Hermione, Ericka, Tonks, Poppy, Minerva, and myself to name a few. Please be our hero everyday by always coming home for dinner.

Love,

Diane

Emma, Hermione, and Ericka had known about the gift. Before Harry could say anything, they looked at him, nodded sternly then broke into laughter. Emma had talked with her oldest daughter the day before, observing to her that a person's basic personality rarely changes much. Harry would most likely always have a saving people thing, and that it was part of what made him so special to her.

They decided to spend the following day at Harry's Place. Harry and Hermione left in the morning to get ready. In reality it was to unwrap his other gift from Hermione. Neither one was disappointed by the experience. They agreed that the topic required a lot of future study and practice.

Dan, Emma, and Ericka had arrived at one. Harry had conjured a large blue spruce Christmas tree. Dobby and Winky had arrived at noon with a box of magical decorations. Ericka and Emma were spellbound with the magical decorations. Harry had prepared, by hand, a fantastic roast beef, potatoes, breads, gravy, and several vegetables. Winky had made a selection of fantastic deserts and snacks.

At 4:00 there was a knock on the door. Harry was not expecting anyone. He wandlessly opened the door. Neville Longbottom, his Gran, and Ginny were there. "Hi Harry. Hi Hermione. Can we come in for a minute?"

"Come in. Happy Christmas Neville. Happy Christmas Ginny. Happy Christmas, Mrs. Longbottom."

Neville replied, "Happy Christmas Harry, Hermione, Doctor and Doctor Granger. Happy Christmas Ericka. Happy Christmas Dobby and Winky."

Neville excused himself. A minute later, he returned to the door. "Harry, I would like you to meet my Mum and Dad."

Frank and Alice Longbottom walked into the room!!! They walked quite slowly, but on their own. Frank looked at Harry, and life seemed to fill his blank eyes. "Hello sir. My name is Frank Longbottom." He spoke very slowly, but this represented a gigantic leap for a man who had been trapped in his own head for the last fifteen years.

Alice's eyes were a bit brighter. "Hello sir. My name is Alice Longbottom." She smiled the faintest smile.

"Please come in. My name is Harry Potter. This is my family, Dan, Emma, Ericka and Hermione. These are my good friends, Dobby and Winky."

They came in. Harry conjured half a dozen comfortable chairs. Frank and Alice sat in silence for a few minutes, looking at the fire.

Neville looked like a man who had everything. Harry could understand how he felt. Both men were spending the first Christmas in their memory in the company of family. Harry was amazed at the change that had taken place in Frank and Alice. When he saw them a year earlier, they were lifeless, similar to a severe stroke victim.

Harry talked to them for a moment, speaking slowly and clearly. "Frank and Alice, you must be very proud of your son Neville. He has grown to be a great wizard. He is a very good friend of ours."

Frank and Alice said nothing. They stared into the fireplace. Harry was about to get up, when Alice said in a slow voice, "Harry, we were friends of your parents. Thank you for finding us."

Harry was stunned at their improvement. "Come and join us for a while." Harry expanded his dinner table and insisted that they stay for desert. Harry decided to open the big bottle of champaign that Dan had given to him to save for a special occasion. In Harry's eyes, killing an evil man was not a special occasion to celebrate. Watching three people get their family back in front of his eyes certainly was.

After the Longbottoms left, things quieted down a bit. Hermione and Emma were talking about something in the kitchen, while Dan and Harry watched a football game on the TV. Ericka was reading the latest issue of Teen Witch Weekly.

“Look Mum, Harry’s in the magazine. There was a picture of Harry sitting on his desk in Defense class in his gray teaching robes.

An Afternoon with Harry Potter

Story by Rita Skeeter

Photo by Colin Creevey

In an exclusive interview, Harry Potter answers a few questions that are on a lot of people’s minds.

Harry, How did all of this get started?

“A prophecy had been made seventeen years ago for telling of my involvement in the down fall of Voldemort. Unfortunately part of it got back to him and he knew of its existence. It started like this:”

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... Born to those who have thrice defied him, Born as the seventh month dies...And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal,”

“That was the reason that he tried to kill me as a baby. My parents had gone into hiding. Their friend Peter Pettigrew had betrayed their location to Voldemort. He murdered my father then my mother before trying to kill me. When that happened, his spirit apparently was ripped from his body and remained that way until 1991 when he came across Professor Quirrell. Somehow he took over Quirrell’s body in an unsuccessful attempt to steal the philosopher stone that Nicolas Flamel was said to have made. That didn’t work, so he left Professor Quirrell to die and remained as spirit until 1994 when Peter Pettigrew found Voldemort. Pettigrew took care of him until he regained his own body the night of the Triwizard Tournament in June of 1995.”

“Professor Dumbledore tried to convince minister Fudge about his return. He either did not want to believe, or was convinced not to due to his associations with Malfoy and others. Voldemort was finally found out when he tried to steal the copy of the prophecy that had been stored in the Ministry last June. I only wish that I could have had the opportunity to stop him sooner than I was able to.”

Now that you have been doing it a while, how do you like working as a professor at Hogwarts?

“I think the whole thing is fantastic. The other professors have spent countless hours of their own time to help me with my own studies, and gave me great lessons on how to teach. The students have been very patient with me as I got used to my new role. I hope I’ve passed along some useful information to the students. I really cannot express how much people have helped me in the last few years. I just keep trying to be a better professor every day.”

What are your plans for the future?

“I made some promises to my fiancé Hermione that I am very interested in keeping. I really like working at Hogwarts and hope I am allowed to continue with that. I think we can reduce the possibility of another dark wizard trying to take over by doing the best job that we can coaching students into healthy attitudes and appropriate careers.”

It is this reporter’s opinion that Mr. Potter will succeed in whatever endeavor he chooses to pursue. Along with the rest of the wizarding world this reporter wishes him happiness and success.

Emma asked, “Harry are you really in the newspapers or magazines everyday?”

“It seems like it Mum. Lately it is for things that have actually happened, or things that I have actually said. I like that a lot better than the lies and made up stories that used to appear. I think things will quiet down though.”

“Anything you say, dear. They all started laughing.”

End Part 4